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DUNGEON OF PLANAR PERILS

ISSUE 88 • VOL. XV, NO. 4

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SEP/OCT 2001

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Dungeon

September/October 2001
Issue #88

This was a dungeon that would terrify any human being—a windowless, lightless row of cubicles where lives could be shuttered away and forgotten as surely as the dead.

—Terry Brooks,
The Sword of Shannara

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Cover

The tyrant Yencig Togan is dead, but his half-forgotten treasures still attract a strange and sinister crowd. Stephen Daniele depicts a terrible triumvirate of villains searching for the secrets of "The Seventh Arm."

Praise Pelor!

D&D Can Improve Your Wisdom

by Christopher Perkins

As you know, I run a D&D campaign every Wednesday night. Pierce Watters, our circulation director, plays a more-devout-than-wise cleric of Pelor named Chuko, and he shared a wonderful anecdote with me the other day—one that made me say, "Heavens, that sounds like an editorial!"

During one session several months ago, Chuko and his stalwart companions stormed the royal palace in Retheq, hoping to rid the city of Evistifos, a *polymorphed* gelugon devil who was conspiring to usurp power. The palace had been magically encased in 20-foot-thick ice, but the heroes called upon their beholder ally Bhol-Dargyn ("Mr. B" to his friends) to use its *disintegrate* ray to "burrow" a passage through the icy barrier. After slaying legions of charmed guards and vile half-fiends, the heroes stormed into the heart of the palace and faced their nemesis, only to have him slip from their grasp.

Denied the head of Evistifos, Chuko called upon the power of Pelor to destroy the devil's ice cauldron—the source of the palace's glacial sheath. As the cauldron melted beneath Pelor's divine light, tremors rocked the palace as the ice cracked and split. Fearing the building's imminent collapse, the heroes fled. Outside, they soon found themselves caught in a downpour of fractured, 30-foot-long ice shards that had broken away from the palace walls. Wicked DM that I am, I had each of the fleeing heroes make a Reflex saving throw. All of them succeeded save one. *praise Pelor!* Chuko rolled a 1.

Lumbering behind the others in his heavy suit of armor, the cleric managed to escape the trembling palace only to find himself about to be crushed to death by a cathedral-sized shard of ice.

Fortunately for Pierce, another player leapt to Chuko's rescue. Shawn Blakeney's character—a half-drow rogue named Lilith—sacrificed a Hero Point (see my editorial in Issue #75) to shove Chuko out of the way in the nick of time. The cleric was alive to count his blessings, after all. The palace, though shaken, weathered the thunderous cascade just fine.

All of this relates to the spring quake we experienced here in western Washington State, which measured a jostling 6.8 on the Richter Scale. One of the things you're not supposed to do during an earthquake if you're indoors is run outside, because there's a pretty good chance you'll get clocked by falling debris as you vacate the premises. It's generally safer to hide under some heavy furniture or stand in a doorframe and wait for the shaking to stop.

When the quake struck in March, many people bolted from their cubes and headed for the exit. Pierce, on the other hand, leapt into the nearest doorframe and waited. He had recalled Chuko's harrowing experience and how the cleric was nearly crushed to pious pulp while fleeing the royal palace.

Pierce told me afterward that he had learned Chuko's lesson well. D&D taught him how to survive earthquakes. So now I'm curious—what has the game taught *you*?

chris perkins

Editor-in-Chief

Dungeon

Volume XV, No. 4 Issue #88

Wizards of the Coast, Inc. presents "*Dungeon Magazine* #88" authors Tito Leati Roger E. Moore Jeff Quick Graham Robert Scott artists Stephen Daniele David Day Kennon James William O'Connor Christopher West Aaron Williams Craig Zipse cover by Stephen Daniele art director Christopher Perkins production director John Dunn circulation director Pierce Watters advertising director Bob Henning advertising/circulation assistant Dawnelle Miesner group publisher Johnny Wilson assistant editor Stacie A. Fiorito associate editor Matthew Sernett editor Chris Thomasson editor-in-chief Christopher Perkins

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Submission Queries: 1-425-254-2281 dungeon@wizards.com
Advertising Queries: 1-425-204-7262 bob@wizards.com
Northeast U.S. Advertising Queries: 1-203-855-0024 stuchmayr@worldnet.att.net
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Letters
Soapboxes for EVERYONE!

Tell us what you think of this issue's adventures. Write to: Letters, DUNGEON Magazine, 1801 Lind Avenue S.W., Renton, WA 98055 or send an email to dungeon@wizards.com.

READER, INTERRUPTED

Mr. Thomasson,

Firstly, welcome on board. I look forward to berating and applauding your work in issues to come.

Second, I just completed a long two weeks of standing at my mailbox and pouting because my first subscriber issue of *DUNGEON* was not inside. Today, my long wait was rewarded. Of course, I tore into it immediately, reading nearly every page starting with my favorite section: "Letters." I was interrupted somewhere in the middle by my younger sister. I had not taken out the included CD and passed it immediately to her to investigate while I read. I'm glad she interrupted; I loved the CD. The "How to Create a Monster" article will be very helpful to my younger brother, who is running a world of his own creation and has had trouble designing balanced monsters. I've only been playing D&D for a few years, and I have only been a DM for this last year. To look at a copy of *DUNGEON* #1, be it digital or otherwise, was just inspiring. I am now happily drowning in art. To all those people who think you need more text and less art: You are just lacking some basic appreciation of true culture. Personally, I think *DUNGEON* could use more art, but that is neither here nor there.

Finally, I am a huge fan of the drow and have never been able to run a successful low-level campaign involving them. "The Raiders of Galath's Roost" (Issue #87) looks to be my answer. I am currently planning a soda-and-pizza campaign weekend (because my current group is still wandering in the "Dungeon of the Fire Opal" from Issue #84).

P.S. Keep up the great work. No matter how busy or time constrained the job might feel, your commitment to *DUNGEON's* quality will always be appreciated, especially by the Gontz family.

Taylor Gontz
Harrisburg, PA

Thanks, Taylor. I hope I can live up to the high expectations everyone has for DUNGEON. I'm a big fan of using illustrations to enhance outstanding adventures, and this issue follows that trend. We've got a variety of styles and palettes for you art buffs, plus some fantastic takes on some classic scenes and monsters.

TEARS OF JOY (& RELIEF)

I just received Issue #87, and I have to say that I almost wept. I now understand and truly appreciate how much work you and all the others put into *DUNGEON*.

The entire issue is spectacular, and I am proud to be a small part of it. I also want to express my appreciation for Bob Klasnich's work. The illustrations (for my adventure, "The Cradle of Madness") are fantastic and I was blown away by the view of the ruined keep. The attention to detail was perfect . . . it's almost as if he read my mind.

I can't thank you enough for being so helpful during the creation and revision process. My first stab at professional writing has been a pleasure. Thanks to you and everyone involved.

Weeping on my keyboard,

Rob Lee
Greenbrier, TN

Stop, Rob. You're making us blush. Besides, with all these compliments to our artists, they're heads will swell and they'll start demanding to be let out of their cells more often.

Legal Stuff

Dungeon Magazine (ISSN# 0890-7102) is published bi-monthly for $19.95 per year by Wizards of the Coast, Inc., 1801 Lind Ave. SW, Renton, WA 98055. United States of America. Periodicals Postage Paid at Renton, WA, and at additional mailing offices.

POSTMASTER: Please send address changes to *Dungeon Magazine*, P.O. Box 469106, Escondido, CA 92046. ©2001 Wizards of the Coast, Inc. All rights reserved.

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SUBSCRIPTIONS: Please contact Publishers Creative Systems at Dungeon@pcspublink.com or call 1-800-395-7760. In the United Kingdom, contact kay.palmer@tnsofres.com or call +44-18-58-41-4713.

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Northeastern Advertising Representatives: Sig or Scott Buchmayr, Buchmayr Associates, 137 Rowayton Avenue, Rowayton, CT 06853. (203) 855-8834.

Printed in the U.S.A.

Distribution Nationally and Internationally
Curtis Circulation Company
730 River Road
New Milford, NJ 07646
Tel: 201-634-7400 Fax: 201-634-7499

MORE BANG FOR YOUR BUCK

I have been devouring Issue #87 for the past two days. Wow! The adventures in #87 are even better than the adventures in Issue #86 by the "big names." "The Cradle of Madness" is absolutely the best 3rd Edition adventure I have seen yet, and I have read all the adventures Wizards of the Coast has published for the new edition of D&D thus far. Kudos to Mr. Lee. I really got a sense of total insanity from reading the adventure, and *Dungeon* was not afraid to print the blood and guts that accompany such madness. The torture chamber was chilling to say the least. I am not a fan of Forgotten Realms at all, but Mr. Williams's adventure "The Raiders of Galath's Roost" is incredibly well done. I can almost feel the grit that he and the other designers have infused into the new Forgotten Realms setting. All I have to say about that is it's about time.

THE NEW RULES MAKE THE D&D GAME MORE ENJOYABLE AND ACCESSIBLE, AS THE RULES ARE SIMPLIFIED, STREAMLINED, AND FLEXIBLE...

I love the new section heading font. You guys seem to be constantly tweaking the mag for the better!

I have only scratched the surface of "Glacier Season," and I have not yet read "Valley of the Snails," but I expect they will live up to the quality of the other two adventures in Issue #87. One final "wow" is that Issue #87 is 144 pages long. At that price for quantity, *Dungeon* is the best value in the gaming industry, bar none. I paid about $3.00 with my subscription for Issue #87. At 144 pages, that's about 2 cents per page. I pay $10.00 for 32-page stand-alone adventures. That's 32 cents per page for a stand-alone adventure, which means I spend 16 times more for stand-alone adventures. How do you do it? How do you provide [such] quality for a lower price?

Even in all its near perfection, however, I managed to find a "problem" in Issue #87, which actually seems to be little more than a mathematical error. I was reading the statistics for the ice golem on page 104, and I found these puzzling sentences in the magic immunity feature: "A cold effect cures 1 point of damage for each 3 points of damage it would otherwise deal. For example, a damaged ice golem hit by a *cone of cold* dealing 30 points of damage would heal 3 hit points." Wouldn't an ice golem hit with a 30-point *cone of cold* heal 10 hit points? Is the example incorrect, or is the error in the sentence immediately preceding the example? I don't know, maybe I am reading something incorrectly.

Eric Evans
St. Plymouth, NH
ericevans9377@earthlink.net

D'oh! Math is hard. There's a reason us editors is working with words instead of with them numbers. Good catch, Eric. The example was flawed, but the actual description of the ability is still correct (a cold effect does cure 1 point of damage for each 3 points of damage dealt).

We're actually quite proud of our value per page, and more gamers are starting to recognize that. Keep spreading the word about us!

MANA FROM THE GODS

I'm writing to you to let you know that after buying my first copy of your magazine, I enjoyed it enough to put in a subscription for three years. I am a DM who started playing D&D back in 1979 when I was only 9 years old, but I stopped playing around 1991 when the real world caught up to me (along with burnout from being the DM for almost all of my playing time). When *Baldur's Gate 2: Shadows of Amn* came out (added to the announcement of *Neverwinter Nights* included with the game), my interest was piqued enough that I went out and bought the new edition of the *Player's Handbook* and *Dungeon Master's Guide* and was won over instantly. The new rules make the D&D game more enjoyable and accessible, as the rules are simplified, streamlined, and flexible enough to allow for greater creativity among players and DMs.

I managed to find a new game group consisting of 3 adult women, 1 teenage girl, and 2 other guys. Most of my new group were unfamiliar with the D&D game in general, and they have enjoyed the new edition quite a bit. The only problem that I have experienced is the lack of time available as a working person and a homeowner to prepare adventures for the party. The availability of your magazine is mana from the gods for me. Even if I can't use most of the material, I can still use the ideas presented as a timesaver. Kudos to you all for providing this service!

As a side note, your "Oooops File" entry for Issue #86 was in error, since the initial AC of 28 is correct. You forgot to add in the base AC of 10 that everyone starts with. So, 10 (base) - 8 (size) + 26 (natural) does indeed equal 28. I have no defense for the ducks though.

George Stewart
via email

Sigh. We're big dorks. Math is hard. Yadda, yadda, yadda. See my comments above. Blah, blah, blah.

Seriously, George, thanks for catching the mistake we made in "correcting" our text. Must . . . use . . . calculator.

NO ERRORS IN OUR WAYS

I thought I'd drop a line to share some thoughts and opinions.

First, congrats to Chris Thomasson for getting suckered . . . I mean, coerced into being the new editor. With as many great minds as seem to be wandering the halls of Wizards of the Coast these days, how can you go wrong? Just remember: As an editor, sleep is optional.

Second, I just wanted to say that I love the mag; keep up the good work. In general, that kind of comment is usually followed by some criticism: "Keep up the good work; oh, by the way, I can't believe you've been running adventures with elves lately! What's up with that? I hate those pointy-eared hobgoblins . . ." or the like. This is not the case with me. I love the mag; keep up the good work. In fact, I hadn't read *Dungeon* regularly for a *looong* while (I think I subscribed in the Issue #12-18 range) but decided to subscribe for three years based on the strength of one issue (#84, for those of you playing the home game; gotta love them drow). Clearly I like where the magazine is, and I trust where the magazine is going. If y'all are ever in Tallahassee, you've got a beverage of your choice and a hide-a-bed to crash on.

Third, to throw my hat into the solo adventure debate, I love (good) solo adventures. They were my primary means of actually experiencing (A)D&D

for many years (I lovingly wrote a column about Fighting Fantasy books several months ago). With the new edition of D&D, solo adventures can possibly serve as a great way to play something off-beat, different, and/or clever: "You are Klatvos, a dwarven paladin recently turned into a vampire. You awaken in a cavern that seems suspiciously like the inside of a sea creature's belly . . ." On the other hand, a little goes a long way; one a year (or every six issues, should you all do something odd like go monthly) would serve me fine, personally.

Fourth, I loved the inclusion of Issue #1 on the latest CD-ROM, and I would gladly support any such further efforts. You *are* taking pre-orders now for the Complete *Dungeon Magazine* CD-ROM archives, right?

Well, that should do it for me. Thanks again for making such a fun mag. I've said it before, and I'll say it again: In my mind, it's never been such a wonderful and exciting time to be a gamer. Keep on keeping on as one of the reasons why.

Steven Marsh
Editor of *Pyramid Magazine*

Thanks for the kind words, Steven. It's always nice to hear praise, especially when it comes from other magazine folks in the industry.

HIGH-LEVEL LURE

Wow! I was totally blown away by "Glacier Season" (Issue #87). It was awesome. I was rendered breathless by the exhilarating build-up from Taigiel's unquenchable thirst for vengeance through the treacherous frozen plains of the tundra that led ultimately to one of the most perilous, heart-wrenching battles I have ever fought. Encore! Encore! Truly it will be a tale to tell for quite some time. With that I salute and congratulate you.

I also wanted to ask you guys and gals a couple of questions:

Being a new subscriber to *Dungeon Magazine*, I want to know where I could buy more recent back issues that I have missed, such as Issues #84-86.

Second, could you could print at least two high-level adventures in each issue? I mostly see a lot of low-level adventures in your magazine, and believe me, just like the little guys, we too like to brave the dangers and thrills of the unknown in search of fame and fortune, whether it be in the lair of an infamous elder wyrm or facing the mighty magic of an ingeniously twisted sorcerer. No matter what, after all is said and done, it is the stuff that so many of us have come to love and crave. So how about it?

Jimmy Garner
Huntsville, TX

We sell recent back issues in the Wizards of the Coast online store; see our website (www.wizards.com) for details.

I would like to see more high-level adventures, especially above 15th level. Hear that, writers?

REVERSE ENGINEERING

First, I want to say that *Dungeon* rocks. Whenever we get to actually play the game (which is a rare occasion), I have almost no trouble pulling an adventure out of my sleeves that works for my players, although *Dungeon* has switched to 3rd edition and we still play AD&D. The adventures themselves have just been getting better. That said, how do you submit a "Map of Mystery"? I don't have the 3rd-Edition game yet, but I'd like to submit maps. Thanks a lot!

Joe Carothers
Big Bear, CA

continued on page 110

Illustration by William O'Connor

ISSUE #89 PREVIEW

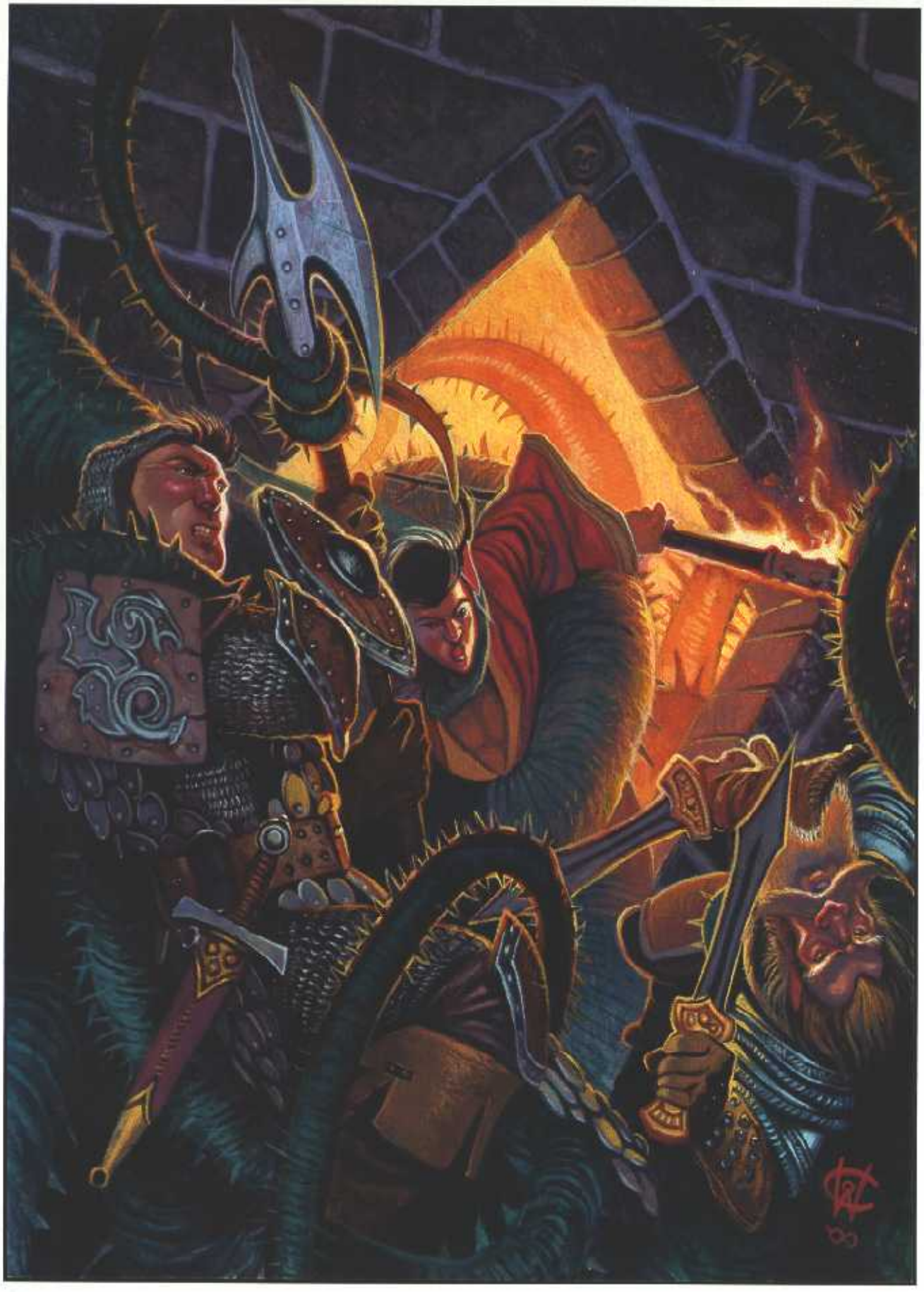
RIVERS OF BLOOD
By Paul Leach
A new life awaits you at the end of the Chernak River, provided you can survive its many perils. A D&D adventure for 4th-level characters.

HEADLESS
By James Jacobs
The heads have started rolling, and time is running out. A D&D adventure for 12th-level characters.

WEDDING BELLS
By Jonathan Tweet
Love is in the air! Come to think of it, death is in the air, too. A D&D adventure for 4th-level characters.

HONOR AND ETA
By David Zenz
It's a dishonorable job, but someone has to do it. A D&D Oriental adventure for 1st-level characters.

AND MORE!



The Door From Everywhere

Some Portals Are Better Left Unopened!

by Roger E. Moore

artwork by William O'Connor • cartography by Christopher West

"The Door from Everywhere" is a D&D Forgotten Realms adventure for four 6th-level player characters (PCs). At least one arcane spellcaster is required. The usual mix of classes, races, and abilities is otherwise preferred, but with a strong emphasis on combat ability, physical or magical, for every individual. The adventure might turn into a wide-ranging free-for-all at some point, and each character risks being separated from the others and attacked by multiple opponents in unfamiliar territory.

This adventure takes into account the events in the Forgotten Realms novel Death of the Dragon *and the D&D game product* Into the Dragon's Lair, *which takes place shortly after the end of the novel. The action requires that the PCs (who are assumed to have gained some renown in the kingdom of Cormyr) be in the capital, Suzail, about Midsummer of 1372 D.R. The PCs might be present for any reason but should be easily seen in public, so one or more of the PCs can be identified on sight. The action in this adventure is not scripted, but the DM should account for the passing of time as usual. After the PCs have been gone for one month, a new party of adventurers will be sent on the same mission.*

† Magic Items Monsters Non-Player Characters (NPCs) Objects Settlements Traps

Adventure Background

By mid-1372 D.R., the battered kingdom of Cormyr is coming to grips with its condition after the brief but nearly ruinous Dragon's War. The first half of this year brought an uprising by several families of traitorous nobles, the ravages of a great dragon and its allied monsters, a chaotic invasion of goblins and orcs, the loss of one major city and grave damage to another, and the loss of the realm's most powerful and experienced leaders. The crown's hold on Cormyr's northern and northeastern frontier is uncertain at best. Hunger and disease are everywhere. Refugees are returning home across the realm, but the whole social fabric is disrupted. Food is costly, and money is scarce. In a kingdom that has known relative security for ages, fear and confusion now fill the populace.

By Midsummer, with the worst turmoil ended, the Steel Regent Alusair struggles to maintain civil order across her lands. Tilverton is now a dark, shadow-filled waste called the Black Crater, but soldiers are building an outpost near it to hold the land for the crown. The trade routes once going through Tilverton have been reopened, but at some distance from the crater. The city of Arabel, retaken in ruins from the orcs, is being rebuilt. Orcs, goblins, and bandits in the north and east are being fought and chased out. Still, the Purple Dragons, Cormyr's great army, suffered grave losses in the fighting and are barely able to patrol the heart of the kingdom, much less the outer regions where numerous nonhumans prowl. Sembia is making unsubtle overtures to take land and influence away from the realm. Many noble families hoard their resources and even their collected taxes from the crown, strengthening their own lands and guards in the event of further disaster. Some nobles might yet pull their lands from the kingdom and declare themselves independent of the monarchy, though the consequences for them would be dark indeed.

On the good side, Alusair can draw from the crown's secret store of gems to make up for lost tax revenue and trade income. Bridges, castles, and towns can be repaired. Army payrolls can be met. Roads can be cleared. So many gems must be sold, however, that the prices of gems across Faerûn will be depressed unless she seeks distant markets for their disposal.

Alusair must take every measure to reinforce Cormyr's authority over the lands it retains, and strong-arm rebellious nobles into obeying her will (or at least doing no further harm to the realm). She must learn the cause of the disaster in Tilverton and, if possible, prevent it from happening again. Arabel must be brought to full strength, all bandits and nonhuman invaders destroyed, and the northern trade routes kept secure and open. Lands from which commoners were driven must be resettled and farmed. Perhaps Sembia can be bribed to keep its hands off the eastern lands, and sea trade can be subsidized and expanded. Perhaps magic can boost crop

SCALING THE ADVENTURE

This adventure is intended to fit into an ongoing FORGOTTEN REALMS campaign with Cormyr in the limelight. The adventure can be transferred to your own campaign, but it will lose some of its flavor—that being the dire condition of Cormyr, the nature of the opponents the PCs face, and the legal complexities of adventuring here—without appropriate substitutions.

Because of the peculiar way in which adversaries are introduced into the adventure (by *portals*), encounters can easily be adjusted for higher- or lower-level adventuring parties simply by adding or subtracting foes. The overall nature and progress of the adventure need not change at all, with the caution that a small group of inexperienced or troublesome adventurers would not be selected for this mission by the Cormyrian crown to begin with. General suggestions follow for other levels.

3rd-5th level PCs: If the adventure were run as written, a large group of such characters, about eight to ten of them, would be appropriate. Otherwise, cut the number of opponents (particularly orcs) at or coming through each *portal*. It is important to note that the monsters beyond Portals 2, 3, and 7 were meant to be exceptionally dangerous to any level of character. A DM can allow low-level PCs to discover early evidence of these monsters, warning them of the danger ahead. (If the PCs choose to go on, that is too bad.) Strikingly lifelike statues beyond Portal 2, human or deer blood spattered across a wide area of the forest beyond Portal 3, and the bodies of the orcs beyond Portal 7 should be sufficient. The twist in Portal 9's linkage won't become evident anyway, as the alternate gate can only be opened on Midwinter night.

7th-8th level PCs, or over four 5th-6th level PCs: Run the adventure as written, but boost nonhuman group encounters (goblins, orcs, or ogres) by another 50-100% in number, adding ambushes when possible. Add two or three extra Zhent villains, of levels about equal to those of the PCs, to the group that attempts to occupy the Stonelands ruins holding Portal 1. Use the NPC Statistics section in Chapter 2 of the *DUNGEON MASTER'S GUIDE* to generate the statistics for these adversaries.

9th- and higher-level PCs: In addition to the above, let more of the *portals* at the Nexus Room be operational, leading to other dangerous spots around Faerûn. Allow a lamia or lamia noble to inhabit the hill of ruins beyond Portal 2. Have the orcs at Portal 4 be led by a particularly powerful and evil monster that survived the Dragon's War. Boost the forces of the cult in Sacrloon (Portal 6) by adding a dracolich in the cellar. Boost the Zhent forces attempting to take over the ruins at Portal 1 with more ogres and perhaps a few hill giants, as well as Zhent spellcasters and perhaps an outsider helper. In the long run, look for a way to add in conflicts with rebellious nobles who learn of the *portal* system and attempt to seize it for use in staging a revolt across Cormyr.

yields. There is so much to do. The regent appears weary and tense these days, finding little solace in the news her generals and scouts bring. Worse, her explosive temper is fraying nerves throughout her court, and she is often more feared than trusted.

In the process of detailing troops to replace those at the Black Crater of Tilverton, Alusair receives reports that new bandits were spotted near there a day earlier. Their lair seems to be an ancient collection of ruins in the Stonelands a few miles from the Moonsea Ride, not far to the southwest of lost Tilverton. Alusair consults her War Wizards and learns that the ruins probably date from the time of Netheril, millennia ago. There is always a chance of finding magic items in any of Netheril's ruins, and the possibility of bandits gaining this or other advantages is unnerving. Alusair delegates one of her trusted commanders from the Blades, Lord Falzo Hawklin of Suzail, to get reliable adventurers on the problem right away, people the crown can trust. She wants the bandits wiped out and the ruins examined in detail. She is saving her Purple Dragons to handle larger problems, rather than break her army into tiny pieces to chase down every potential troublemaker in the war-weary realm.

Lord Hawklin leaves the Steel Regent, grateful she has not seen fit to challenge him to another duel to wear off her frustration and rage at the kingdom's dire predicament. Rather than posting a general advertisement for adventurers, Lord Hawklin gets the advice of the College of War Wizards, who maintain a vast system of records on every arcane spellcaster known to operate within the kingdom. He also checks with the commanders of the Purple Dragons, who issue the adventurers' charters in the realm. After a day's consideration, Lord Hawklin sends a number of servants to locate any members of adventuring groups on his short list, ones he feels will do a reliable job in cleaning out the bandit nest and exploring the ruins. The first group Lord Hawklin's servants discover and recognize in the streets of Suzail is (surprise!) that of the player characters.

ADVENTURE SYNOPSIS

In mid-1372 D.R., the PCs are hired by the Cormyrian government to clear out a reported lair of bandits along the Moonsea Ride, the main road heading northeast out of Cormyr. The Moonsea Ride leads (or once did) to Tilverton, a border city that was destroyed in Mirtul of that year by an unknown magical attack of great power.

The "bandits" turn out to be an assortment of villains and monsters from distant parts of Faerûn, all fighting each other in the ruins of what was once an ancient military post. Exploration of the ruins confirms that they are Netherese in origin, over two millennia old. The foreign visitors here arrived by using a newly activated *portal* network that the Netherese built. The PCs have the chance to temporarily shut down the *portal* system to prevent more visitors from arriving, but they must also fend off Zhentarim attacks and other monsters while doing so.

No particular plot line or time schedule must be followed to resolve the mission. Once the PCs reach the ruins in the Stonelands, they are largely on their own in determining what to do next and how to tidy up any mess that results. The actual settings are minimal in nature, so you can set up all encounter areas quickly and easily if using tabletop miniatures.

CHARACTER HOOKS

The PCs must be reasonably reliable in the eyes of the Cormyrian government. They are given considerable latitude to deal with the problem before the crown, and thus have to

be trustworthy. It would help if one or more of the adventurers had connections to nobles loyal to the crown, perhaps even being minor nobles themselves. Characters with histories of fighting on the side of Cormyr in the recent Dragon's War or other conflicts, or aiding the crown or Cormyr's people in some way, would have a clear advantage at the start in the relations with Lord Hawklin.

It is possible that one or more characters have heard of the late King Azoun's long-standing offer to grant the title of Baron of the Stonelands to anyone who built a castle there, lived in it, and kept the area free of Zhentarim, bandits, monsters, and so on. It is well known that the Steel Regent also honors this policy, and she would further like someone to establish a new caravan stop to replace the one at Tilverton (which would also strengthen Cormyr's hold on its northeastern border). The value in creating a stronghold and gaining noble titles might move a group of PCs to use the Stonelands ruins as the foundation of their future home, particularly if they uncover the well near Portal 1.

Much of the general information about the state of Cormyr, given in "Adventure Background," should be available to the PCs from conversations held with almost anyone around the capital, Suzail. The conflicts with some noble families, marauding nonhumans, and so forth are common knowledge. However, what really happened to Tilverton, some of the background machinations of the Dragon's War, and what the Steel Regent means to do about the current troubles remain unknown to the public and the PCs.

Beginning the Adventure

One or more well-known adventurers are approached by a young, teenaged page on horseback. The page (female half-elf Arii) might have been noticed moments earlier, scanning the crowd in Suzail or watching the PCs as if unsure they are the people she seeks. Once the page approaches, the PCs see that the unarmed youth wears fine clothing and the badge of a noble house in Cormyr (that of the Hawklin family). The page guides the horse close to the PCs, hails them pleasantly, and asks their names. If asked why, the page replies, "I have business from the crown," but says nothing further. If the group properly identifies itself, the page invites the group to come to Lord Hawklin's manor within the hour. "M'lord wishes to speak with you directly," the page finishes. A brief period can be allowed to assemble the rest of the group. The page leads them all to Lord Hawklin's residence, a small manor with marvelous gardens along the north side of Suzail's great Promenade.

Lord Falzo Hawklin (male human Ari6/Ftr4; Diplomacy +6, Knowledge–history +7) is a stunningly handsome and intelligent young man, quite mature, sophisticated, and collected in his manner and bearing. Tall, dark haired, dark eyed, smooth voiced, and impeccably dressed in black, he is enough to make anyone believe that maybe some nobles really are better than everyone else. He moves and acts in a relaxed, casual manner, but his mind is quick and he is obviously athletic. He wears only an ornate, ceremonial-appearing dagger on his belt (*+2 dagger of speed*), but he carries several other magic devices (*ring of mind shielding, +3 ring of protection,* and *+4 bracers of armor*).

He invites the PCs to sit with him in a large, open gazebo, saying that they are well warded there against spies of nearly any sort and can enjoy the breezes and summer flowers as they talk. Once the PCs are settled into their chairs, Lord Hawklin has a servant fetch drinks for everyone, then begins speaking the moment the servant has left the gazebo. He uses the "royal we" while speaking with the PCs, as he is acting as the Steel Regent's direct agent in assigning the mission:

> "We have a little problem, and we thought you might wish to help us out. If you don't mind some traveling and dry air, and maybe giving a few brigands a good drubbing, this should be a nice outing for you.
>
> "The crown is short on manpower at the moment, and we received a report two days ago of some brigands or troublemakers north of here, near Tilverton." He grimaces. "What used to be Tilverton, anyway. We need you to go there and get rid of the problem in whatever way you see fit, give the local area a look around, then come home. That's all there is to it. Shouldn't put you out overly much. You'll be well rewarded and all that. Are you in?"

Lord Hawklin pauses to look at the characters directly and see whether they are interested, even though he's described it in only the vaguest terms. He responds to most questions (exact nature of mission, reward offered, problems expected) with, "We'll get to that shortly." If pressed, he calmly says, "You are being offered a mission directly from the crown. It's the sort of mission that makes you an agent of the government, and we need people who have the best interests of Cormyr in mind when they take it. There's more to this mission than I've said, yes, but we are reluctant to disclose anything further until we have your sworn agreement to take up our cause. We have appointments with two other bands of heroes after this one, but you were our first pick. Are you in?"

Assuming the PCs agree to take the mission as described, Lord Hawklin nods, satisfied, and continues:

> "When we finish here, you must each swear a loyalty oath to Cormyr and an oath of secrecy, and you will each receive a writ stating you are on the crown's business and are not to be delayed. You should enjoy that, the free food and all. The writs are good only for a month, but I doubt you'll need them for that long.
>
> "There are a few things the crown would like you to keep in mind, of course, as you go your merry way. Forgive me for stating the obvious, but you are not to interfere with the Purple Dragons at . . . at the Black Crater. I'm never going to get used to saying that. My third cousin lived there before the disaster. I think she's dead now." Lord Hawklin is silent for a moment, staring at the flower garden. "As I was saying, we are counting on you not to have to request the assistance of the Purple Dragons, as they have their own mission, watching over the Black Crater and assisting our other forces in the area. You are to report to Captain Dunman when you arrive—ah, I forgot to say that you will be traveling to Tilverton by magic, as we don't have time for you to ride or walk there—and you should report the results of your expedition to the captain when your work is done. A verbal report is all that's necessary, although you may have to go into some detail for her. You will give a similar report when you return here, to me, and please give me all the details you gave the good captain, if not more.

"In addition . . ." Lord Hawklin pauses again, his expression hard to read. "In addition, you are not to discuss your mission with anyone other than myself, Captain Dunman, or a higher representative of the crown. You are not to talk about anything unusual you see at Tilverton with anyone in this city or anywhere else. The kingdom does not need a thousand new panicky rumors flying around about what happened there; we have rumors enough already. We spent a lot of time and trouble rerouting the Moonsea Ride around the Black Crater so that travelers would have the worst possible view of it. We might soon have to build a wall around it to keep the heroes out of it as well. What you see of the Black Crater must stay with you alone.

"Further, you are not to approach the Black Crater under any circumstances. The soldiers and War Wizards there are under strict orders to kill anyone who tries to get to the crater without authorization. Your writs do not authorize any business with it. You might not wish to draw near the crater anyway, as we have good suspicions that those who enter that pit are slain, and their souls lost forever. No one who ever went into the pit has come out, and we have been unsuccessful in recovering them or even divining their fate. They are simply gone. Just do your job and let everyone else there do theirs.

"There is another matter." Lord Hawklin sighs and shakes his head, a faint smile coming to his face. "You might actually see this as good news, I suppose. The brigands in the area appear to be using some ruins as their hideout. We have reason to believe the ruins are quite old, possibly Netherese in origin. You are to explore those ruins and see what they contain in the way of threats to our kingdom, remove those threats, and report back on them. That assumes any threat exists, of course, which might not be the case as the ruins have been very quiet for over a thousand years. If you do find anything there that would be of assistance to our realm or of interest to the crown, we would be pleased to know of it, of course. Otherwise, you can keep what you find, as always. Just mop up the brigands.

"That's about it. Our drinks are coming now, I see, so let us rest a short while longer and enjoy a bit of beauty and peace. Then you can get your writs, take your oaths, and be on your way before nightfall."

If asked, Lord Hawklin reveals that the crown's intended reward is to pay the characters in fine gemstones. Two payments are actually being offered: one immediately after the mission is successfully completed, and one three months later, paid out at a government building in Suzail. Each payment comes to 6,000 gp per person in gems, and either share (or both as a whole) can be used to purchase available magic items of equivalent value from the crown. Moreover, each PC will receive a full reimbursement of the current year's adventuring fees and taxes. Lord Hawklin makes a general reference to additional benefits if the PCs discover anything of "special importance to the crown" among the ruins, but he doesn't expect anything much will come to light.

Lord Hawklin is also happy to make small talk about the weather, life in Suzail, the garden, foreign politics, and so on, though he says little about the state of the kingdom at present. The latter topic obviously bothers him a lot, although he tries to minimize trouble. No matter what the PCs say, they cannot meet with anyone in the government higher than Lord Hawklin, and certainly not the Steel Regent, who is in meetings all this month and likely to be in a foul, dangerous mood.

You can swiftly play out what follows at Lord Hawklin's manor: Swearing loyalty to Cormyr and secrecy about the mission, gaining the minor writs for the mission (see "Cormyrian Adventuring Laws"), and checking on all the PCs' official documents to make sure they are properly registered with the government as adventurers or wizards. (Remember that the PCs are required by law to take copies of all their documents with them on this adventure.) You might wish to have one or two characters run into brief bureaucratic snags at this point. For example, it might develop that one character, by coincidence, has the same name as a villain from Sembia. Perhaps a PC's name has been misspelled on some papers, or someone forgot to check in regularly. Any such problems are cleared up quickly, but the impression should be left that Cormyr cares about legalities.

If characters need supplies, they can purchase up to 1,000 gp of equipment per person, paid for by the crown. Almost anything within reason can be purchased in Suzail. Horses are recommended, as a long journey is part of the trip.

Finally, Lord Hawklin gives the group a set of papers showing the ancient alphabet of Netheril. No dictionary is provided to translate any words. The papers can be used only to determine if the Stonelands ruins are Netherese in origin, if any writing or carvings are found there.

Once this is done, Lord Hawklin escorts the PCs from his manor to their mission. He leads them down the Promenade, Suzail's main street, to the western end of the Court, the gigantic government building in the center of Suzail. There, he leads them to a broad set of double doors that appears to be a service entrance for taking large deliveries, as from wagons. Opening it (it is unlocked, at least for him), he takes them inside a brightly lit room resembling a small, empty warehouse, 60 feet square and 20 feet high. An identical set of double doors stands on the far side of this room; the sides of the room have piles of empty crates, straw, and minor debris pushed against them. The room smells like horses were recently stabled here. Bright illumination comes from a half-dozen globes suspended from the ceiling, radiating magical light.

Lord Hawklin motions for you to wait by the doors. He closes them, then turns to face the doors on the far side of the chamber.

"In the name of the Forest Kingdom, and of Alusair, the Steel Regent, I bid you open," he says in a loud, strong voice that echoes in the large room.

Swiftly, the doors on the far side of the room vanish, replaced by a whirling, sparkling pool of gray light about 16 feet across, hovering about a foot above the ground. The pool of light then slowly sinks into the floor until it is only a half-circle, 8 feet high and 16 feet wide. The gray light filling the half-circle fades, and you see a landscape beyond it.

The scene is of a rocky wasteland among high hills, at the same time of day as it is now in Suzail. Several dozen armored men with drawn longbows, obviously Purple Dragons, watch you through the magic portal, arranged in a semicircle facing you. Other soldiers behind them gaze at you with mild interest that is quickly lost. One yawns, and

two others continue a conversation after only a brief scowl in your direction.

One soldier in a Purple Dragon officer's uniform walks over to the portal and peers through without entering.

"The sun has not set on the forest kingdom," she says stiffly.

"Nor shall it so long as we hold it in the sky," replies Lord Hawklin. "Captain, please see that my companions here get food and rest. They've come to clear away the vermin you reported. Their paperwork is in order." He pauses. "All is as before?"

"No change, your lordship," says the army captain. She looks tired and grim, old beyond her youth. Her eyes have a dark, haunted look. "Our friends from Waterdeep are preparing a report for the regent. It should be ready by tomorrow."

"Thank you, captain," says Lord Hawklin. "We will be ready to receive it. The gods be with you."

"I pray that they are, your lordship." The captain's weary voice and expression make it plain that she has her doubts. She looks expectantly at your party. Lord Hawklin turns and solemnly waves you onward, through the portal.

Camp of the Purple Dragons

Once the PCs step through the *portal*, Captain Miri Dunman (female human Ftrg) silently escorts them to a large circular tent nearby. If anyone starts to wander off or dawdle, she snaps. "Follow me. Let's get this over with." At the tent, she oversees three Purple Dragon sergeants who examine all the PCs' paperwork in detail, ignoring any pleas to the effect that Lord Hawklin cleared their papers earlier. After 10d10 minutes of consulting books and charts, the sergeants let the PCs go. If anyone was so foolish as to alter these papers (and be caught) or else throw them away, that PC is arrested at once and held under guard until he or she can be returned to Suzail (by *portal*) and jailed there to await trial. You can play out this possibility as desired.

Once the paperwork is out of the way, Captain Dunman takes the group to a mess tent where the PCs can eat, rest, and prepare for the journey ahead. The captain expects the PCs will leave no later than dawn the following day. The sooner they go, the happier she is. The army campsite is on a ridge about 150 feet high, overlooking the western end of Tilver's Gap and providing an excellent view of the region. The PCs can count about forty soldiers here. (Actually, fifty are present, all above 2nd level as fighters, supported by another twenty War Wizards of 4th-10th level.)

Captain Dunman warns all PCs that spells cast within a five-mile radius of the Black Crater are likely to malfunction. She cannot explain why this happens, but she details the effects with great familiarity. Essentially, the Weave (global magical field) in this area is so disrupted by the Black Crater that spells have a chance of failing in direct proportion to the spells' power. Multiply a spell's level by ten and use the result as the percent chance the spell has of failing (thus, a 2nd-level spell has a 20% chance of failure). She urges spellcasters to save their spells until they get at least five miles from the crater to the west or southwest. The same advice is given to caravans passing though.

The Purple Dragons here are not willing to talk to strangers, especially adventurers, regardless of their papers. However, with care, the soldiers reveal a little about the area and the problem with what's left of Tilverton. One or two might point out the Black Crater, which is a circular depression about a mile across. Not even the walls of Tilverton remain. Three roads can be seen leading up to the edge of the pit. A careful observer will note a place on the Moonsea Ride about five miles away to the east where the road is blocked. A new route has been marked by stone cairns, leading distant caravans from the Dales considerably away from the Black Crater. The new route winds around the Purple Dragons' camp at some distance, joining up with the Northride and eventually connecting back to the old Moonsea Ride two miles to the southwest. The soldiers monitor all caravan traffic.

Even from a distance of three miles, a person can see that the crater is dark inside, as if filled with black fog. Disturbing movements can be seen inside the pit, but what they are cannot be discerned. Anxious soldiers who notice PCs watching the pit take pains to again warn the characters not to approach any closer to the crater than this campsite.

In the unlikely event that any PC does attempt to get near the crater, Cormyr's soldiers and wizards make a concerted effort to slay, not capture, that character. There is a spreading concern that anyone entering the pit is lost to an otherworldly power, and slaying a curious busybody is better than giving a potential enemy another ally. Any PC who actually enters the pit is forever lost to the campaign; the player can tear up the character's sheet and forget about it. Not even a *wish* spell will return such a lost adventurer.

CORMYRIAN ADVENTURING LAWS

Because this adventure takes place in Cormyr, the PCs should already be aware of certain laws covering freelance adventurers ("lawless freeswords" to many Cormyrians), particularly restrictions on magic use and the bearing of arms in this kingdom. You might find it interesting to have unprepared PCs go through some of this bureaucratic work before the actual start of the adventure. Conversely, you can ignore these regulations if they are not appropriate for your campaign.

Adventuring charters: Any group of five or more adventurers who plan to travel and work together on missions must register with the crown as an official adventuring force. The group must obtain a "royal charter of arms" in Suzail from the court, usually the current chancellor, lord high marshal, or ruler. The chancellor, currently Beri Huntsilver (female human Ari10), is available to take applications for charters in Suzail. An application must be signed by all members of the group, who must disclose their real names and places of residence, and the group must describe its collective name, badge, seal, coat of arms, standard, flag, or other identifying symbols. Any permanent change to the group's title, symbols, or size requires a revision of the charter; charter records are updated on the first of each month. A copy of the charter is issued to the group as a whole, with extra copies available for 100 gp each.

A charter for five or six adventurers (forming a legal "fellowship") costs 1,000 gp, with an annual tax of 300 gp on the anniversary of the date of signing the charter. In 1372 D.R., larger groups are charged 2,500 gp per person per tenday for temporary charters if they are not native to Cormyr. The group's projected date of disbanding (within two tendays) must be registered and adhered to. Native Cormyrians are charged 1,000 gp per person per tenday. A long-term or permanent adventuring charter for a group of seven to thirty (legally, a "band") costs a flat 5,000 gp per person, for natives and non-natives alike. A group leader must be designated to speak for all in the band in legal matters. The annual tax on a band as a whole is 1,500 gp.

A late fee of 20 gp per day, for up to ten days, is assessed on annual taxes on adventuring groups. Failure to pay the tax and late fee within this period will cause the charter to be revoked. Revocation means that a group (if it has not informed the crown that it has disbanded) has decided to oppose the crown and is now officially "outlaw." A warrant is issued to the Purple Dragons for the group's arrest and detention, though this happens often enough that groups are not automatically thought of as being in rebellion (more likely, they are just preoccupied with adventuring), and so are not attacked immediately by force of arms. The group, once located, is warned to allow the arrest, taken into custody, and given the chance to pay all overdue taxes and late fees. After this, the group can either officially disband at no cost, losing its charter for good, or have the charter reinstated to continue adventuring.

A member of an adventuring group can be stricken from its membership by the crown for criminal actions, and a charter can be revoked at any time for any reason by the issuing authority. As travel and communication across Cormyr take time, so any changes to a group's charter will also take time to fully take effect.

Peacebonding weapons: Armed adventurers who travel about in peace (in other words, while between missions into dangerous areas) must have "peacestrings" tied around their sword and dagger hilts to their scabbards. The Purple Dragons enforce this law, though they term it a "custom." Soldiers at Purple Dragon guard posts are willing to tie peacestrings of their own make on visitors' weapons.

Using a peacestring is a symbolic gesture meant to put commoners at ease, although Purple Dragons are all too aware that most have no effect in a real fight. Large weapons like battleaxes are expected to be capped with leather and stuck in belts, or strapped to backs so as to make them difficult to reach. Bows are usually unstrung and carried on backs, requiring a round to prepare for battle. Weapons that double as tools (hammers, hand axes, eating knives, and so on) escape peacestrings if used by farmers and workers known to local Purple Dragons.

If stopped by Purple Dragons for not following the "custom," an adventuring group can produce a copy of its charter and be allowed to proceed without further hindrance, so long as this occurs in an area where weapons would reasonably be kept at the ready (in the Stonelands, for instance, but not downtown Suzail). The penalty for failing to put peacestrings on bladed weapons in areas where fighting would not be expected is seizure of all carried goods by the crown, with possible imprisonment and expulsion from the realm. Self-defense in the presence of witnesses is permitted as an alibi for having an unbound weapon.

Wizard registration: Every wizard and sorcerer of 5th level or higher is required to register with the crown. Each wizard must travel to Suzail and meet personally with Caladnei (female human Sor11/Ftr4), the current Royal Magician of Cormyr and Chairman Emeritus of the College of War Wizards, and report his or her name, sigil, place of residence, and travel plans for the next six months. Each wizard is personally responsible for ensuring this information is updated and current; there is no registration fee. By mid-1372 D.R., senior War Wizards have stepped in for the overburdened Caladnei to keep up the registry, and even trusted nobles will take the initial applications. The penalty for failing to send in updated information is a fine of 500 gp, doubled with each passing tenday, with a guaranteed visit from the War Wizards after two tendays. Refusal to register is grounds for banishment from the kingdom, and refusal to leave is grounds for being arrested and imprisoned (or slain, if resistance is fierce). Wizard PCs are assumed to have already registered with Caladnei or her War Wizards, but travel for this adventure must also be registered once the adventure is accepted.

Minor writs: If adventurers are hired on a mission for the crown, they are often each given a paper that is legally referred to as a minor writ. This paper states that the named bearer is on royal business and is not to be delayed. Assistance in the form of food, water, and shelter must be provided within reason. However, a minor writ has many limitations of which adventurers are rarely aware. The bearer is not empowered to confiscate items from Cormyrian citizens or to interrogate or search such citizens; these legal powers are for certain members of government, nobles, the Purple Dragons, War Wizards, village militia, and city guards. Further, many army officers, War Wizards, and so forth have full freedom to ignore minor writs if, in their judgment, doing so serves a greater need or cause. If a besieged army must hoard its supplies, an adventurer with a minor writ cannot get food from it if the commander says no. Because the major use of minor writs is to get free food and drink from inns, restaurants, and taverns, writs are commonly called "meal tickets" by those who use them regularly. For obvious reasons, many merchants dislike seeing a minor writ, as it means they must write off the cost of any food taken or otherwise suffer the loss of business with no opportunity for compensation.

Reaching the Stonelands Ruins

Captain Dunman provides a reasonably accurate map to the ruins where the bandits were spotted. The ruins are twenty miles to the southwest, about five miles on the northern side of the Moonsea Ride. Along the Moonsea Ride itself, no encounters are expected except with normal caravans and wayfarers. The captain warns that Zhentarim traditionally creep about this region, trying to hire nonhumans into their service and spying on road traffic. Raids against caravans here are frequent following the Dragon's War, and bandits and orcs driven from Cormyr have fallen in with the native goblins, bugbears, ogres, and other undesirables.

The captain supplies the PCs with horses if they did not bring their own, but she does so grudgingly and demands they be returned once the PCs' mission is concluded. Aside from food, the army here parts with little else except advice. They conserve their supplies against the possibility of attack from any quarter (such as from the crater, though they never mention this possibility as it so unnerves them). The captain sees the PCs off at dawn if they don't leave earlier, watching them with narrow eyes until they are out of sight.

The Stonelands are largely barren, with patches of tan grass and scrub among the huge boulders and rock outcrops. The low hills are rugged and scarred with gullies. Wildlife is infrequent but includes antelope, deer, goats, giant badgers, flightless birds, and wolves, with eagles soaring overhead. Storms in this area in the summer are usually dry, featuring amazing displays of lightning with occasional ground strikes in the distance. Mostly, though, the weather is dry and hot.

Feel free to include random encounters along the road with caravans heading northeast from Cormyr to Mistledale and beyond. Unfortunately, it is not uncommon to see burned wagons, horse skeletons, ruined merchandise, and unmarked graves by the roadside here, as well as goblin skulls stuck on poles. About fifteen miles down the road, the terrain levels out a bit, although it is still very rough.

The crudely rendered map the PCs are given (see handout above) clearly indicates a particular stone cairn near the road where they are to turn to the southwest to reach the ruins. The cairn, which looks like a pyramid, is discovered by any PC making a Spot check (DC 15) once the appropriate point on the map is reached.

Leaving the Moonsea Ride means traveling across five miles of gully-ridden, rock-strewn, sun-baked, snake-infested wasteland. About a mile from the ruins, the party must make opposed Spot checks against the orc guards on watch. The winner gains a surprise advantage against the other group.

Player's Map of the Stonelands

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The Stonelands Ruins: Ground Level

Over the past 1,800 years, the elements and angry nonhumans have completely reduced the Netherese stronghold here to its bare foundations. No wall or tower remains. As there are many more interesting ruins within a day's ride, this one has been ignored by nearly everyone until now. It has been rediscovered by nonhumans who, rather than digging their way into the ruins, have tunneled their way out.

As explained in "How the *Portal* Network Was Activated," orcs won control of a Netherese *portal* network from the Cult of the Dragon, and one of the *portals* opens into a subterranean chamber in these ruins. The orcs dug their way to the surface, and a force of about a dozen now guards the ruins, awaiting orders. Three orc sentries crouch down on top of a raised octagonal area in the center of the ruins where a central keep once stood. With them are two pet wolves that obey the commands of any orc present.

Creatures (EL 6): Thunder Peaks orcs regard Cormyrians of any race as their mortal enemies. These are relaxing at the moment, talking about the recent fight with the Cult of the Dragon while scanning the horizon for foes.

The wolves, trained from birth to obey any orc's commands, hate humans and elves, attacking them in preference to anyone else.

Male Orc Ftr2 (3): CR 2; Medium-size humanoid (orc); HD 2d10; hp 13 each; Init +0; Spd 20 ft. (base 30 ft.); AC 16 (+6 banded mail); Atk +4 melee (1d12+2/crit ×3, greataxe) or +2 (1d8/crit ×3, longbow); SQ darkvision 60 ft., light sensitivity; AL CE; SV Fort +3, Ref +0, Will -1; Str 15, Dex 10, Con 11, Int 9, Wis 8, Cha 9.

Skills: Climb +7, Listen +2 (includes Alertness feat), Spot +2 (includes Alertness feat). *Feats:* Alertness, Blind-Fight.

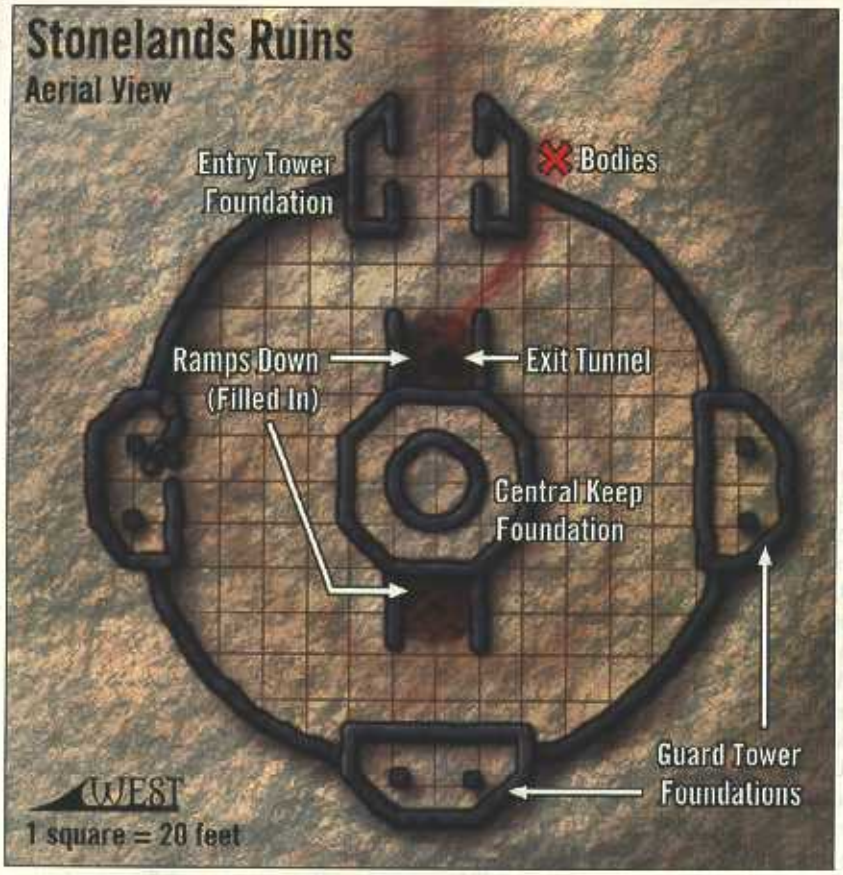
Possessions: Banded mail, greataxe, longbow with 30 arrows, sack of 10d6 gp (Cormyrian mint), assorted pouches and drinking flasks, and see **Treasure** below.

Wolves (2): hp 15 each; *Monster Manual* 204.

Tactics: If the orcs spot anyone approaching the ruins, they warn the others, and all of them take up defensive positions. The two wolves are released to attack the intruders first, while six orc archers attack from range and the other orcs prepare an ambush below. They do not activate the *portal* to escape unless it appears they will be overrun in the lower chamber. These orcs might be reinforced by more from the lower level.

Treasure: One orc has a single *potion of fire breath* and will drink it after the wolves have been sent against attackers.

Development: Anyone who examines slain or captured orcs notices at once that the orcs are from the Thunder Peaks, given their shield designs (the eye of Gruumsh over crossed



lightning bolts). Anyone who fought in the recent Dragon's War knows that these orcs were scattered all over Cormyr in the fighting, so it would not be unheard of for them to be in the Stonelands.

One last interesting feature here is a trail of blood leading from the tunnel to the north, over the low rocky parapet that remains of this stronghold's outer wall. The bodies of two humans, stripped of their clothing and mutilated by axe strikes, were tossed over the wall's foundation for scavengers to eat.

Anyone examining the bodies finds that each has an interesting tattoo in black on the upper left arm—black flames with eyes peering out from them, raised over a clawlike symbol. It's the mark of the Cult of the Dragon, a notorious religious cult that worships undead dragons and aims to bring down all civilization. There's no explanation for why this group would be here, either. (The cult mounted an unsuccessful counterattack one day ago to retake the *portal* system. The bodies of orcs slain here by the cultists were taken through the *portal* for burial in the Hullack Forest, beyond Portal 4.)

The Stonelands Ruins, Lower Level

The original stronghold was simple in construction and purpose, as described in "The Netherese Fortress of Blister" sidebar. Soldiers from Blister, on a Thunder Peaks mountaintop seventeen miles southeast of these ruins, used the *portal* here to attack nonhuman armies besieging the keep. Eventually, the nonhumans changed their tactics, and the stronghold had to be abandoned. The lower level of the stronghold held a *portal* linked to Blister and a freshwater well, but both were abandoned and buried in dust and sand. Half the area was cleared away once the orcs reopened the *portal* from the other side (the Nexus Room), but the well has not been uncovered yet.

Creatures (EL 8): In the cleared area of the lower chamber are eight orcs from the Thunder Peaks.

Two orcs have three arrows apiece coated with a gummy resin taken from one of the slain cultists who attacked them earlier from the *portal*. The resin is poisonous (equal to Medium-size spider venom from the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, page 80).

Male Orc Ftr2 (8): hp 13 each; see "The Stonelands Ruins, Ground Level" for complete statistics and equipment.

Tactics: If alerted, three orcs join the three directly above the chamber to fire arrows at intruders; the other five press themselves against the walls out of sight from anyone peering down the tunnel to the surface. If someone descends the tunnel but does not call out in the orc language first (giving names and other information in a recognizable voice), two of them fire poisoned arrows. One orc activates the *portal* to get reinforcements. (If this or any other orc escapes through this *portal*–Portal 1–he goes immediately to Portal 4 in the Nexus Room and activates that to get help. A flood of orcs might force the PCs to flee temporarily.) The other two orcs wait on either side of the entryway into the chamber with greataxes drawn. Once these two orcs enter melee, the other two orcs (if the *portal* is not open) drop their bows, draw their axes, and join the fray.

Development: Once the orcs have been dealt with, the PCs can examine the excavated chamber. The most remarkable feature here is a pentagonal door or archway on the east wall of the chamber. It is about 10 feet across. The arch itself is 1 foot thick and protrudes from the stone wall about 1 foot. The back wall of the arch is of an unidentifiable stone, not the same material used to build the wall around the arch. Even as worn as it is, the archway still has a considerable amount of writing on it, along every side. The lettering is Netherese, which can be confirmed by anyone comparing it to the Netherese alphabet letters in the papers given to the party by Lord Hawklin. The floor around the arch and across the chamber is rough, as if dug out, and trampled by boots. Pools of dried blood are everywhere, but they do not seem to have come from the orcs here, who were unharmed before the party arrived.

All of the orcs here know that to operate the *portal*, all one has to do is put one hand on the arch and utter a command phrase, in any language ("Part the veil of the universe for me!"). The orcs won't divulge this information under physical duress, however; magical means must be used (*charm person*, *detect thoughts*, and so on).

Once activated, the pentagonal archway seems to change color slightly, as if the stone were now a lighter shade of gray than before. The air around it has a peculiar odor, like that after a *lightning bolt* spell has been cast, and the temperature feels like it has dropped a bit. After 1 round, the space within the archway becomes illuminated with foggy light, and the back

THE NETHERESE FORTRESS OF BLISTER

Around 1286 D.R., the Netherese government established a military base on its southern border to guard the pass between what are now the Storm Horns and the Thunder Peaks. Many Netherese wizards wished to explore the south, some planning to colonize the Inner Sea coastline in time and add it to their empire. However, they faced vast numbers of orcs, goblinoids, and kobolds who lived along the northern shores of the Inner Sea and regularly raiding Netheril's borders. Many of these nonhumans were refugees from the realm's green lands or were descended from past refugees. Their bitterness at the loss of their homeland and their hatred of the Netherese were bottomless.

The army base, whose official name loosely translated as "All-Seeing Master of Lightning," quickly became a fortress-city built into the upper reaches of one of the Thunder Peaks, a particularly rugged, round-topped mountain nicknamed Blister. (The base itself was unofficially called Blister by soldiers who held a tour of duty there. Most of them hated the difficult and demanding life on the dusty, windblown peak.) The fortress commanded a superb view of the pass, and nonhumans entering the empire here were easy to detect. The Netherese garrison used a series of hidden or protected teleportation *portals* to build its counterattacking forces on the plains below and strike at the nonhumans. (The Stonelands ruins were once a transport point to and from Blister using Portal 1. The stronghold was abandoned when it eventually came under siege.) Other *portals* stretched across the southern boundaries of the empire, and bored wizards added still others at whim for their private research.

Blister itself was easy for the enemies of the empire to detect, thanks to the magical lightning displays put on there during military ceremonies at night. Direct attacks against it grew with each passing year, despite being regularly repulsed with heavy losses to the nonhumans. After a few centuries of this sport, the nonhumans changed their tactics. Blister had come through the assaults unscathed, except to grow in size and power. Following some violent changes in leadership, the nonhumans withdrew from Blister, except for strong scouting and probing units, and instead began to strike directly at the human expeditions that left the empire through the pass. Despite the great power of Netherese magic and individual wizards, the expeditions nearly always traveled by horseback and wagon because of the vast number of supplies and servants that were brought along. A typical expedition was equal to a small army in size, though not in combat might. The wizards themselves were often marked by a shortsighted egotism, long a part of their culture, that hampered their ability to use their magic to defend their underlings. Netherese wizards, in short, looked after themselves and almost no one else.

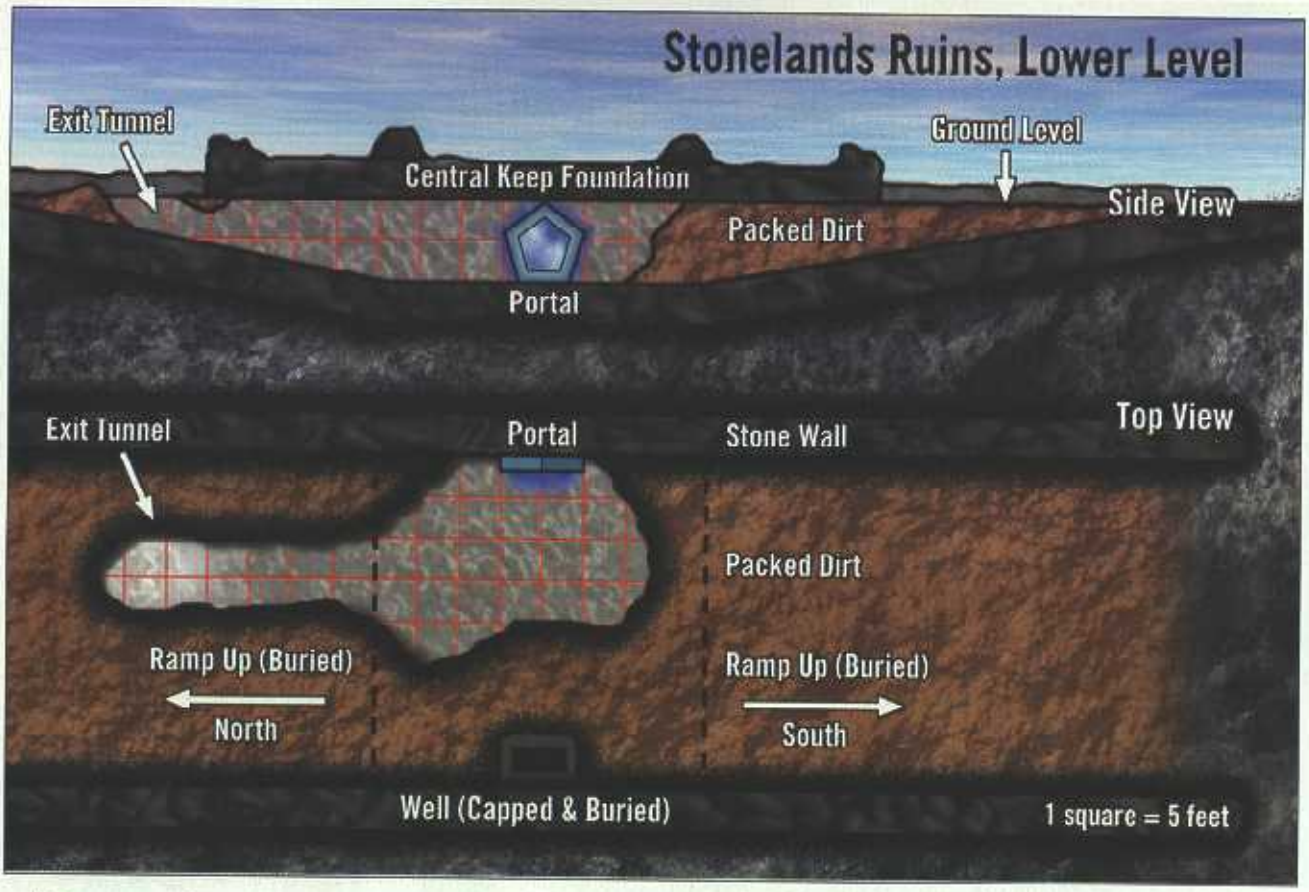
Nonhuman attacks against these expeditions met with considerable success. Many wizards fled combat, deeming a horde of orcs to be an unworthy foe, and left matters to their hard-pressed underlings. The orcs, goblinoids, and others frequently overcame their opponents and destroyed huge caravans and their supply trains completely. Devious traps and well-laid ambushes demoralized those travelers who survived the assaults. Within a century, traffic through the pass was almost completely shut down. Worse, reinforcements for Blister were also endangered, as the nonhumans seized large quantities of magic from the looted expeditions and used much of it to attack heavily armed units caught on the ground. The wizards who ultimately commanded Blister were not particularly competent in military matters, and some of their generals were not much better. It is ironic that the nonhumans, who could not match the wizards in magic or intelligence, turned out to be far wiser in military matters. Blister was carefully kept in a permanent state of siege, its armaments now almost impotent, and the southern pass was blocked. The teleportation links on the plains were sealed off to prevent their use by the nonhumans to invade the base, but their magic was left active.

Some reinforcements were able to enter Blister with the aid of various teleportation spells or flying devices, but Blister was a hard post, unpopular with most troops. Food was always in short supply, as little could be grown locally. Magical assistance became less available once the phaerimm appeared to challenge the empire, as the wizards directed their efforts to combating this new foe. Blister itself suffered a severe attack by phaerimm around 442 D.R. that destroyed many of its underground supply rooms and caused near starvation among the troops. Bridges, stairs, and tunnels connecting various levels of the fortress-city collapsed. Several wizards in command positions were killed during a personal feud afterward; the remaining wizards were overwhelmed by their duties, and some fled. Blister was largely abandoned at this point, as the Netherese now fought the phaerimm's life- and magic-draining assaults across the whole realm. Netheril's fall in 339 D.R. cut off the small trickle of supplies and reinforcements, and the weary soldiers at Blister knew the end was near.

Around 312 D.R. (almost 1,700 years ago), kobold sappers completed a gigantic tunneling project begun hundreds of years earlier, entering Blister through its lowest underground levels while assaulting the city from the outside. The tiny nonhumans, the only group that had not abandoned all hope of conquering the fortress-city, poured into Blister by the thousands and overwhelmed the garrison. The destruction and looting of the city went on for months. Word of their triumph sent orcs and goblinoids on a delirious rampage, flooding the southern regions of Netheril for a brief period before the spreading wastes of Anauroch forced them back. Their descendants now live across the Goblin Marches and Stonelands, telling ancient tales around their campfires of how they drove an empire of wizards into its grave.

What the kobolds did not destroy, the elements did. At present, Blister is a huge network of ancient, monster-filled caverns and weathered mountaintop ruins that you can develop as desired. The kobolds' descendants remain (with strange allies), and a few strange magic effects and items from Netherese times have survived. This underground network has no connections to the vast Underdark.

The three-story administrative building from which Blister's *portal* network was operated is a partially intact shell. The wooden second floor collapsed after the building was set aflame, leaving a huge empty hall (about 35 feet high) over a rubble-filled first floor. The third floor, buttressed by magic, held firm, but the wooden roof burned away and even the charcoal from it is gone, leaving the top floor with solid walls and no windows or doors, open to the sky. No stairs exist in the building, as teleportation was used instead. The floor-to-floor teleportation magic is entirely gone now.



wall disappears. After 1 more round, the *portal* becomes completely connected to another active *portal* in the system (at the Nexus Room). The two *portals* now link, in every way, the space on either side of them. Sounds and scenes outside one *portal* can be heard and viewed through the other. Objects and creatures tossed or passing through one *portal* come out the other. Instead of an instantaneous transfer of material through the Astral plane, the two *portals* actually join their respective spaces in some manner.

Left uninterrupted, this connection lasts for only 10d6 minutes. Two minutes before the *portal* connection ends, the stone archways of both *portals* grow noticeably darker, almost black, in color. A low, clear musical note, as if from a tuning fork, can also be heard. This effect lasts for 1 minute, during which time passage through the *portals* can still be made. In the last minute of activation, the connection between the two *portals* becomes unsure. An illuminated mist fills the space within the archway, and all scenes and noises from one side cannot be seen or heard from the other. Objects and persons caught in or passing through the archways are either flung back and prevented from crossing through the *portal* (70%) or shoved on through the *portal* with considerable energy (30%). A Reflex saving throw (DC 12) is required to prevent 1d4 points of damage if thrown. After this final round, the *portal* link ceases functioning, and the stone archways return to their normal appearance. The operation of the *portal* is unaffected by spells such as *hold portal*, as no actual, physical door is present.

To close the *portal* quickly, the user merely places one hand on an archway and speaks another command phrase ("Close the veil of the universe for me!"). The connection immediately becomes unsure, as above, with objects and persons caught in the mist-filled archways either flung back and prevented from crossing through the *portal* or shoved on through. After 1 round, the *portal* link ceases functioning.

If the PCs slay the orcs present and never figure out what the pentagonal doorway is, other orcs will take care of the problem for them. A relief squad of eleven orcs and two wolves (they carry no poison but are otherwise identical to the orcs in the ruins) opens the *portal* and comes through one day after the PCs arrive. They are unaware of any fighting, and simply mean to send the other orcs home.

A freshwater well is buried against the west wall. If uncovered as the rest of the room is excavated, it looks like a rectangular stone coffin, 10 feet long, 5 feet wide, and 3 feet high. If the 6-inch-thick stone lid (weighing about 480 pounds) is lifted away from the top, the stone wall is seen to be 1 foot thick. The water level is 50 feet down, a huge potable aquifer that could supply drinking water to a whole town. No buckets or other means of retrieving water are present.

The Nexus Room in Blister

Read or paraphrase the following boxed text when the PCs peer or pass through the *portal* below the Stonelands Ruins:

> Peering through the strange pentagonal doorway, you see a large chamber beyond that appears to be open to the sky. A wall stretches away to your immediate right, beyond the doorway, and another wall stands opposite you about 60-70 feet away. Along both walls, you can see other pentagonal archways just like this one, four per wall. The room's floor is filthy with assorted debris and old stains.

The Nexus Room is a 2,000-year-old stone-mortared room, 70 feet by 70 feet. It is surrounded by a stone wall whose top, crumbling with age, is about 11-16 feet high. The well-built room is actually on the third floor of a ruined but still standing building, though no stairways or windows are present. (This was a building from Netheril, and a teleporter was used to get from floor to floor. Lighting was provided by magic, but that's all gone now.) The room had a large, ornate wooden roof above it, but it burned and decayed over 1,600 years ago, and nothing is left of it but marks in the stonework where the rafters and support beams were placed.

Over centuries of being open to the desert air above, the room collected a lot of dust, branches, bones from griffons building nests, and some fallen stonework from the walls. Recently, Cult of the Dragon members and Thunder Peaks orcs have tried to clean the place up, but it still looks messy. Some debris has been shoved against the walls, except for assorted piles of dirt and branches around the center of the room. Much of the debris was disposed of by orcs, who hurled it out through Portal 5.

Along each wall of this room, spaced about 6-7 feet apart or so, are four pentagonal arches that project out from the wall. Each *portal* has a numeral painted beside it, in white paint, starting from the *portal* the PCs are using (Portal 1) and moving clockwise around the room to the *portal* to their right (Portal 16). The paint seems to be a recent addition.

Portals of the Nexus Room

Of the original sixteen pentagonal *portals* in Blister's Nexus Room, only eight can now be activated by touch and voice command. (In later adventures, other *portals* can become active as the old magic stirs to life again—in other words, when you are ready for them to be opened.) However, the *portals* operate in an unpredictable fashion. The magic used to create them was laid down in a haphazard fashion, and time has eroded the *portal* system's reliability. The deteriorated state of the Nexus Room's magic is not obvious to an onlooker, beyond the fact that eight *portals* cannot be activated.

Once activated, the pentagonal archway of an operating *portal* behaves exactly as the *portal* that led the PCs here (Portal 1). This includes the duration of the *portal's* activation (1d6 minutes), and signals to indicate the *portal* will soon close (2 minutes before the connection terminates).

Each of the eight working *portals* is linked to a specific separate *portal* somewhere else in Faerûn. Originally, the magic powering and directing all of the *portals* here could be modified by Netherese wizards to connect to a variety of other *portals* in the complete system. About seventy pentagonal archways were part of this system, most of them scattered in various locations to the south. The Nexus Room's operating wizards merely cast a few spells to cause a *portal* there to select a new connecting *portal*, and the new connection would be effectively permanent, no matter how many times it was activated, until another connecting *portal* was selected. These *portals* were primarily for the use of the military, scouting enemies, and supplying forces in the field. However, they were also used by wizards to aid their exploration of the rest of Faerûn, connecting to laboratories and research facilities they built across the world.

As the orcs and goblinoids around Blister began attacking wizards and troops away from the citadel, many of the stone archways were deactivated to prevent the nonhumans from gaining use of them. (The system for activating a *portal* was, after all, quite simple, and anyone could copy it after seeing it only a few times.) Some archways were discovered by nonhumans and fitted with traps to slay those who used them, or were destroyed by force or magic. Before the fall of Netheril, nearly the entire remaining *portal* network at Blister was deactivated, as the surviving wizards in charge believed (rightly) that the soldiers there were on the verge of deserting en masse through the *portal* system.

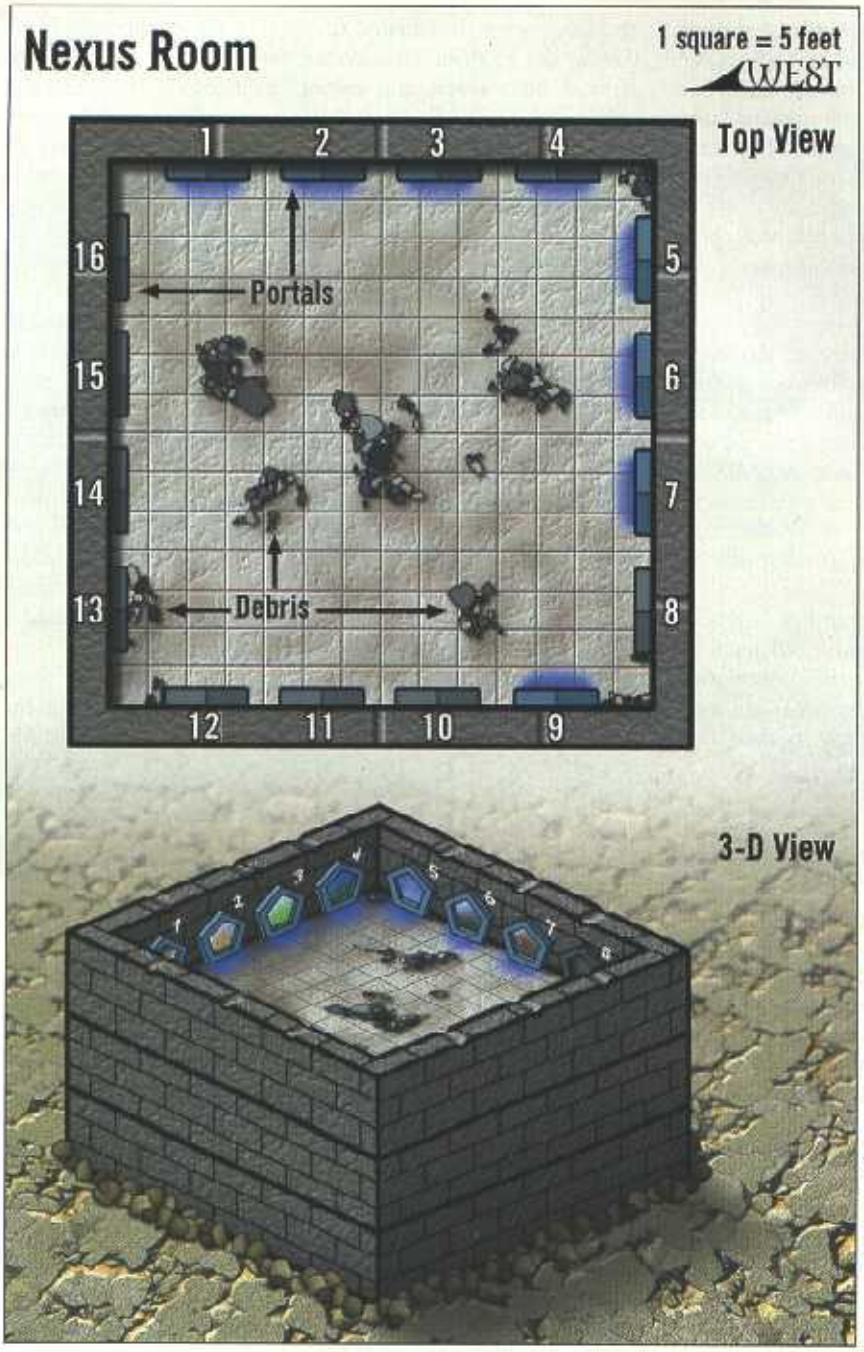
Before they were finally deactivated, most of the Nexus Room's sixteen *portals* led to surviving archways in various locations south of Blister, in the lands now known as Cormyr and Sembia. These aided military strikes at nonhuman armies, but they were discontinued before long as the nonhumans found the archways and sabotaged them. A few *portals* were connected to archways placed by wizards for whatever purposes, but these were deactivated early on to prevent nonhumans from using them. As a result, the operating *portals* appear to lead to a random assortment of places around Faerûn, with no apparent rhyme or reason to their location except for the obvious clustering of some *portals* within a couple hundred miles to the south. Even the reason for this clustering will not be immediately clear to the user without a great deal of research into Netherese history, particularly about the empire's decline and fall. (The great library at Candlekeep might be useful here in long-running campaigns. Survivor states of Netheril kept a few records of Blister's predicament, and some of these documents were brought here by adventurers or researchers.)

How the *Portal* Network Was Activated

Portal 6 is the source of all the chaos and trouble into which the PCs are heading. (See the description of this *portal* later, under "Operating Portals of the Nexus Room.") Once used by Netheril's military for attacks and spy missions against nonhumans, the buried chamber holding Portal 6 lay forgotten for centuries until the city of Saerloon, in Sembia, was built right above it. A merchant discovered the stone-built room while digging below the foundation of his shop, and he had the chamber completely excavated and converted into a wine cellar. The business has since passed into the hands of rogues belonging to the Cult of the Dragon, who maintain the shop as a front for their activities.

Recently, one of the cult members discovered the pentagonal archway on one wall of the old cellar was magical. Careful examination of the chamber revealed that one of the old floor stones was made to be pried up, and below it were polished metal plates on which were engraved instructions on reactivating the *portal* system. The plates were placed there by a Netherese wizard who meant for the chamber to be reactivated by someone else from Netheril, assuming the war against the phaerimm would eventually be won. With the help of an allied sage, the cult was able to translate the instructions, and an armed force reactivated the *portal* system and passed through it.

The cult members came at once to the Nexus Room in Blister and found it had been used as a griffon nest for many years. Fortunately, no griffons were present. Once they shoved aside the debris, the cultists began exploring the possibilities of the other *portals*. They numbered the *portals* from



one to sixteen using paint on the walls next to each, so they could keep track of what each *portal* did.

Their first choice was to open Portal 4, which had disastrous consequences. Though startled to see the *portal* opening on their side, the Thunder Peaks orcs who were resting on the other side immediately attacked. In the brief, brutal fight that followed, the orcs overwhelmed the cultists. A junior member of the cult begged for his life by offering the orcs the secret of operating the *portal* system, but the orcs killed him and the other cultists after getting the information. (The metal plates were kept in Saerloon by other cultists.)

The orcs elected to work on the *portals* during the night, when they were at their peak and humans were not. The orcs opened Portal 1 and found it led to a rubble-filled chamber. They swiftly cleared part of it out and explored the ruins above, but they were not sure of their location. (At this point, a distant Cormyrian scout spotted them and forwarded the report of "bandits" in the area, which got the PCs involved.) Portal 2 was left closed after a nocturnal foray by several orcs ended when they met a basilisk there; only one orc survived to tell the tale. Portals 3 and 5 were found to be interesting but useless, their locations on Faerûn unknown to the orcs. (Most of the rubble from Portal 1 and the burnt griffons' nests was thrown through Portal 5 to be rid of it.) Portal 6 was left closed but carefully guarded, as the orcs knew from their (late) prisoner that it led to more cultists in Saerloon, whom they expected would open the *portal* again before long.

Then the orcs opened Portal 7. Within minutes, a band of eight orcs encountered several late-night revelers from one of the excellent dining establishments in Monksblade and killed them. The orcs did not outlive their victims by even an hour. Opening the *portal* attracted the attention of a local spirit known as the Looking Lady. Unknown to everyone in the present day, the Looking Lady was originally a wizard from Netheril, struck by a poisoned arrow during a goblin attack on her expedition. Mute and unable to cast spells from the poison's effects, she fled the battle to find the nearby *portal* through which her expedition had emerged, but she died before she could touch the archway. For 2,000 years, the Looking Lady has silently prowled the general vicinity of her death, searching for some device or clue to make the *portal* operate, which it will not do given her undead state. She has watched the nonhumans be driven out by human settlers as Cormyr slowly rose. The pentagonal archway forming her *portal* (noted as magical but deemed harmless) was made part of the rear wall of a temple to Tyche during the period when Monksblade became a center for religious worship. A variety of legends, all false, arose about the spirit, and her presence was accepted and even capitalized on as an attraction for visitors to see. The Looking Lady had not attacked anyone for centuries, as everyone wisely left her alone to wander about.

When the Thunder Peaks orcs opened the *portal* to Monksblade, the Looking Lady was instantly made aware of the *portal*'s operation. She hurried back to pass through the *portal*, but the orcs attacked and delayed her. After killing them, she got to the archway but found the *portal* had closed. Insane with rage, the Looking Lady became a terror to Monksblade, attacking anyone who went about at night. Five people, excluding the orcs, have now been killed by her.

After the loss of the eight orcs through Portal 7, witnessed by the orcs remaining in the Nexus Room, the orcs elected to open only Portals 1, 3, and 4, avoiding all others. (Unknown to them and the cultists, Portals 8 and 10-16 were not functioning anyway at this time.) Still uncertain as to the real location of the Nexus Room, the orcs nevertheless discovered that Portal 1 went to the Stonelands after discovering some goblin-made items of a style the orcs recognized. A sizeable patrol of orcs, with supplies, was left in the underground chamber outside Portal 1, and a second force began exploring outside Portal 3, also hunting for game. Additional Thunder Peaks orcs, meanwhile, had gathered outside Portal 4, assembled by messengers from the initial group. The orcs' leaders are currently arguing over the best way to use the *portal* system to continue their war against Cormyr and the annoying Cult of the Dragon.

Just prior to the arrival of the PCs at the Stonelands ruins, the expected counterattack of the remaining cultists from Portal 6 took place. Fighting was intense as heavily armed human warriors forced their way into the Nexus Room and fought hand-to-hand against the equally well armed orcs there. The cultists were soon overwhelmed once more despite their use of poison and spells. A few surviving cultists fled through Portal 3, but they are now dead. Orcs killed in the attack were taken through Portal 4 to be buried by their sizable tribe. Six orcs were left in the Nexus Room to guard it, and more were left at Portal 1. The *portal* network went unused for a day, until the PC arrived at Portal 1.

A few minutes before the PCs open Portal 1 to the Nexus Room, a two-headed griffon came out of the sky, remembering the place of its birth, and was pleased to find tasty orcs here for it to rend and eat. The griffon is gone now with its meal, but it will return only 4d4 minutes after the first PC steps out into the Nexus Room.

Creature (EL 5): A two-headed griffon returns to the Nexus Room, flying in over the wall. The griffon shrieks once before it appears, so PCs can get a Listen check (DC 10) to detect it before it comes into sight.

This creature is identical to a normal griffon except that it gets an extra bite attack (+8 melee, 2d4+4 points of damage) and has a +8 racial bonus to Spot checks in daylight (instead of the normal +4 bonus).

Two-Headed Griffon (1): hp 63; *Monster Manual* 113.

Tactics: The griffon is not hungry, but it is territorial. It has instinctively decided that this is a prime location to re-establish a nest, and it has determined to drive any intruders away. The griffon fights until reduced to 20% of its hit points or less, at which point it decides its nest can be built elsewhere.

Using the *Portal* Network Now

The *portals* in the Nexus Room will operate properly as above for the first 3d4 times they are used each day. More than one *portal* can be activated at the same time.

After the above limit, the system's performance worsens, but this will not be immediately obvious to the users. The system now needs to rest after each use for 1d4 hours, or else it will operate in a chaotic manner. If the system in operated without such rest, each Nexus Room *portal* opened now has a 50% chance of appearing to connect to its regularly assigned *portal*, but it will actually send anyone passing through it to a third *portal*, selected at random from the present choices available. As soon as one person or object has completely passed through the *portal* to the randomly chosen *portal*, that *portal* link shuts down and cannot be reopened for 1d4 hours. Anyone or anything else in the pentagonal archway will be thrown back the way he, she, or it came from, with Reflex saving throws needed to avoid 1d4 points of damage from falling.

The Portals

The following is a list of where each of the eight operating *portals* connects and the current environment around that *portal*, including local inhabitants. Adjust the descriptions given to the players based on the time of day, which will be approximately the same at each of the eight *portal* exits. Weather at the various locations can also be added, with conditions at Portals 1 (Stonelands), 2 (Anauroch), 3 (High Forest), and 6 (Sacrloon) probably being quite different from those at Portals 4, 5, 7, and 9, which lie in the southern half of Cormyr itself.

Portal 1 (Stoneland Ruins)

This *portal* leads back to the excavated underground chamber in the Stonelands ruins. If the PCs left guards here, the chamber and ruins will be just as they left them.

If the PCs did not leave guards and have been gone to the Nexus Room or elsewhere for longer than 2 hours, the upper part of the ruins are now being explored by a Zhent explorer and his nonhuman followers. The Zhent, Lord Gargdol, is a minor noble from Zhentil Keep who actually enjoys the Stonelands and prefers ogres to the humans he worked with at home. Ogres like him as well. This motley group came here to spy on the activities at the Black Crater of Tilverton, trying to figure out what's going on there, but the thought of waylaying merchants on the roads proved more appealing.

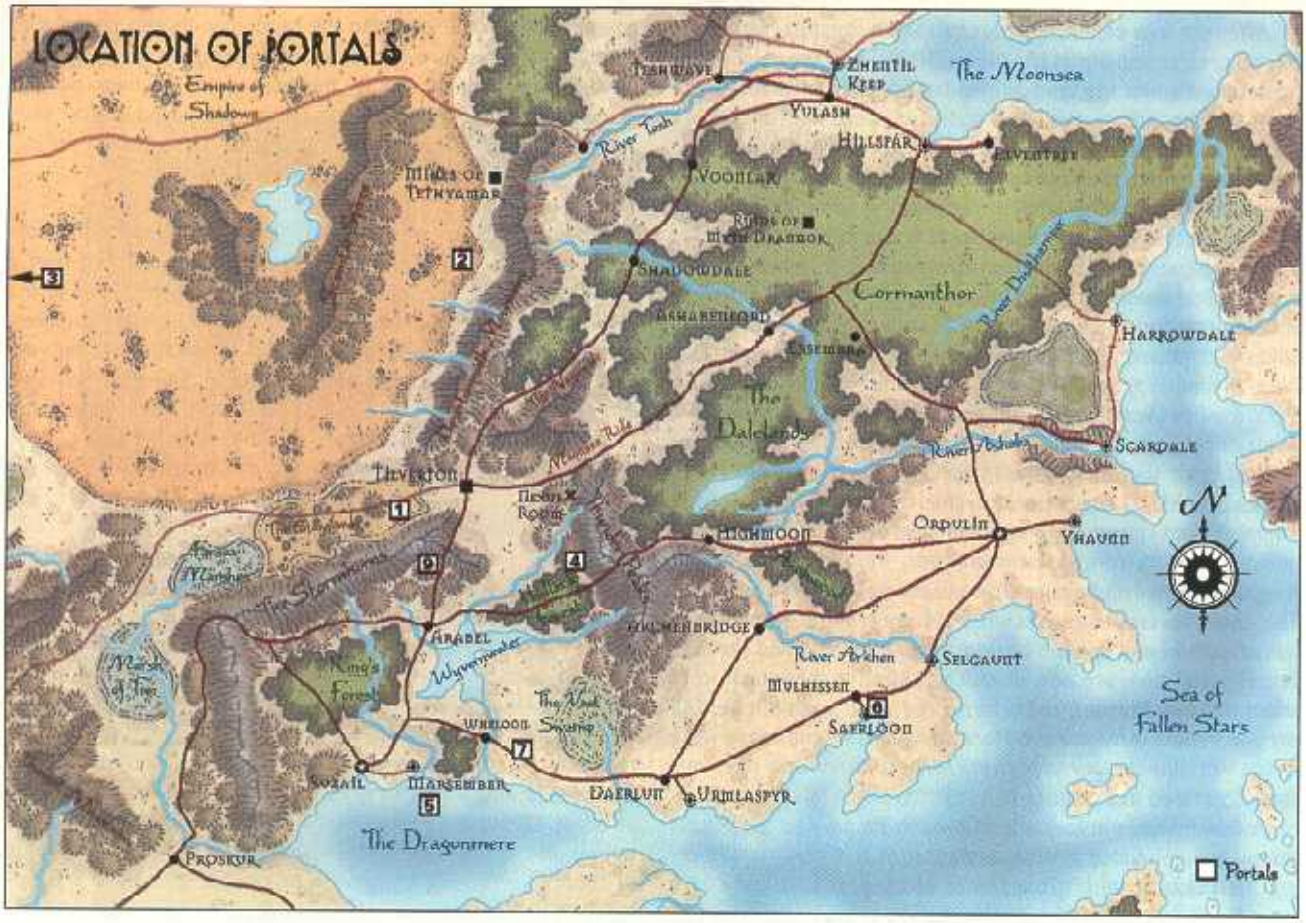
One ogre spotted the ruins, and Lord Gargdol led his group to the site. They have already found evidence of the orcs' and PCs' presence here (assuming that such was left out by the PCs) and now are on guard against anything exiting the tunnel from the underground chamber. One ogre lies on the ground by the *portal*, listening for anything that might come out. If alerted, the ogres quickly surround the exit tunnel, raise their clubs, and get ready to strike. Lord Gargdol is happy to let the ogres have their fun, but he has prepared his own attacks.

Creatures (EL 9): Lord Gargdol's mission is to patrol the Stonelands, spy on traffic along the Moonsea Ride, and cause havoc whenever possible to the Cormyrians. He's also good at gaining ogre followers and might yet lead large groups of them against Purple Dragon patrols in this area.

Lord Gargdol, Male Human Ftr7: CR 7; Medium-size humanoid (6 ft. 4 in. tall); HD 7d10+21; hp 71; Init +5 (+1 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative); Spd 20 ft.; AC 25 (+9 armor, +5 shield, +1 Dex); Atk +12/+7 melee (1d8+7 plus 1d6 electricity/crit x3, *+1 shock battleaxe*); or +8/+3 ranged (1d8/crit x3, longbow); AL CE; SV Fort +8, Ref +3, Will +4; Str 18, Dex 12, Con 17, Int 12, Wis 14, Cha 15.

Skills: Climb +6, Handle Animal +3, Intuit Direction +3, Jump +6, Listen +4, Ride +2, Search +4, Speak Language (Giant), Spot +4, Wilderness Lore +4. *Feats:* Alertness, Cleave, Endurance, Improved Initiative, Leadership, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (battleaxe), Weapon Specialization (battleaxe).

Possessions: +2 banded mail, +1 wooden shield of arrow deflection, +1 shock battleaxe, ring of sustenance, brooch of shielding (61 hp remaining), *goggles of night*, longbow with 46 arrows.



The ogres are named Redface, Deadbiter, and Three Eyes (who has an eyelike birthmark on his forehead, not another eye). They are as loyal to Lord Gargdol as ogres can possibly be to a human, because he gives them magic items and speaks their language perfectly.

Ogres (3): hp 30 each; *Monster Manual* 144. Note that since Three Eyes carries a *+1 greatclub*, his melee attack bonus is +9 melee (instead of +8), and the damage he deals is 1d10+8 (instead of 2d6+7).

Possessions: Redface carries an *eversmoking bottle*. Lord Gargdol gave Deadbiter a *horn of fog*, and Three Eyes a *+1 greatclub*. Redface and Deadbiter use their items constantly to play jokes on each other. Three Eyes just likes to smash things.

Portal 2 (Anauroch)

There is no map for this location. The *portal* exits onto the top of the ruins of a Netherese floating city Opus, now an isolated hill on the eastern border of Anauroch. Read the following to the players:

> Beyond the portal is a desert. A hot, dry wind [a cool, dry wind at night] blows through the portal, carrying bits of dust and sand with it. The view outside reveals the rocky, debris-strewn top of a hill overlooking a barren, sandy wasteland. Dunes are visible in the distance, as are low rocky outcrops. To the left, you see mountains. Nearer, the hilltop is covered in numerous scraggly, brown plants and dirty, odd-shaped stones, some of them flat and geometrically regular (squares, rectangles, and so on).

Any PC who has seen the outer reaches of Anauroch quickly gets the idea this might be a place in that desert, and it is. The hill is about 1,100 feet across at its base and 320 feet high, an anomaly rising from a vast, flat stretch of parched desert. A Bedine town, Tel Badir, lies sixty miles north-northwest of the hill. The high, barren peaks of the Desertsmouth Mountains are clearly visible on the northern and eastern horizons, seeming quite close although the foothills actually start fifteen miles away. The pentagonal archway here faces southeast. A huge canyon lies three miles west; to the south, the desert stretches for over thirty miles.

This *portal* originally led to a military supply center near the top center of the floating Netherese city of Opus, which was destroyed in around 339 D.R. during the (literal) fall of the empire. As the floating city of Opus struck the ground, killing everyone on it, the *portal* survived the terrific shock but was knocked flat. The floating city, originally an upside-down cone cut from a mountaintop and floated by magic, instantly became a round hill. In later years, various intelligent monsters and adventurers visited the tumbled ruins here, most not comprehending what the hill actually was. The intact *portal*, lying face-up, was used to hold water as a makeshift pool for some centuries, but was eventually recognized as magical and raised to its proper position. No one could make the *portal* operate, however, and it has been ignored for many years.

An exploration of the hill itself reveals the remains of numerous encampments dating back many hundreds of years; some campsites are obviously recent. Some were made by traveling Bedine, but most are from Zhent, Hillsfar, Cormyrian,

Sembian, or Dalelands expeditions. A few were made by adventurers from even farther afield. Little of value is here aside from minor lost items (coins, tools, small weapons, and so forth). Also present are many geometric stones, which were once the tiles, bricks, blocks, columns, and other components of the buildings on Opus, as well as a number of well-carved statues depicting fearful Bedine tribesmen and surprised-looking wayfarers. Two of the statues are Thunder Peaks orcs, one surprised and one angry, staring in the same direction at something on the slope that is not there now.

Creature (EL 5): A desert basilisk has made its home on the hill. It comes out only at night, feeding on the scorpions, insects, snakes, and other wildlife. Hunting at night, especially when the moon is not full, allows it to lie in wait for prey and catch it without turning the prey to stone with its magical gaze. Bedine now avoid the hill for this reason. During the day, assume the PCs have a cumulative 20% chance per hour of running across the drowsy basilisk and awakening it. At night, the encounter happens within 1d10 minutes of the PCs stepping through the *portal*.

Basilisk (1): hp 49; *Monster Manual* 23.

Tactics: The basilisk is territorial and fights to the death. It is smart enough to realize when it is overmatched and doesn't hesitate to use its gaze attack. It will try, however, to spare at least one PC from its gaze, so as to save itself a meal.

Development: If the basilisk is dealt with, local scorpions remain a problem, particularly late in the day as the scorpions (of every size) use the stone-backed archway as shelter from the afternoon heat. In time, a solitary lamia might also wander into the area to investigate the hill and its possible secrets.

Portal 3 (High Forest)

This *portal* leads to the overgrown remains of a wizard's ancient home, deep in the High Forest. This area was originally in the elven kingdom of Eaerlann. The archway faces the southeast, in the direction the sun rises. Read the following aloud when the characters pass through this *portal*:

> The portal opens into a deep forest over level ground, except for a low mound about 25 feet in front of the archway. Trees are closely spaced except in a clearing the extends 30 or so feet around the mound. Tumbled building stones, very worn and covered with moss, can be seen around the overgrown clearing. The woodland is idyllic and quiet.

The mound is about 55 feet across and covered with briars and shrubs. Anyone who makes a successful Spot check (DC 20) discovers that droplets of dried blood are spattered everywhere across the ground and plants near the *portal*. Bloody handprints even mar the *portal* itself. Bootprints in the earth suggest some kind of intense struggle, with at least two people being dragged away from the portal in the direction of the mound. (Perhaps they were dragging something heavy from the mound toward the *portal*, however.) Their bootprints dig into the black soil, then end abruptly about 20 feet from the archway. These marks are all that are left of two Cult of the Dragon rogues who escaped from the orcs but were caught and slain by the resident monster here: a tendriculos.

A pentagonal archway was placed here in the High Forest long ago with the permission of an elven wizard, a noble subject of Eaerlann, who befriended several Netherese wizards. When the wizards were sent to Blister to support the military effort there, the *portal* by her tower was linked to the Nexus Room, and she and the wizards stayed in touch. Unfortunately, the wizard was slain and her home destroyed when she investigated a nearby tomb containing a hideous monster, an abomination used as a weapon ages ago during one of the elves' ancient Crown Wars. The Netherese at Blister quickly closed her *portal*, intending to reopen it later (after things calmed down) to investigate the monster themselves. Netheril fell at this point, however.

The tendriculos has lived here since, consuming local wildlife, ruining the wizards' abode, and growing ever larger. This abomination becomes dormant after feeding, allowing

hungry and careless larger animals (and the rare adventurer) to come within reach of its two gigantic tendrils.

Creature (EL 8): The tendriculos appears to be a low hill on which only small shrubs and briars grow. The air is strangely quiet in this part of the High Forest, as no birds will inhabit the area where the monster lives. As the monster was active in the last few hours, no other animals are here, either. A character accustomed to the outdoors (like a druid or ranger) notices the absence of sound here at once; others must make successful Spot checks (DC 15) to realize that anything is amiss.

Tendriculos (1): CR 6*; Gargantuan Plant; HD 18d8+144; hp 225; Init -1 (Dex); Spd 20 ft.; AC 18 (-4 size, -1 Dex, +13 natural); Atk +15 melee (4d6+13, bite) and +10 melee (1d8+6/1d8+6, two tendrils); Face 20 ft. by 50 ft.; Reach 25 ft.; SA improved grab, swallow whole, paralysis; SQ plant, regeneration 10; SV Fort +19, Ref +5, Will +5; Str 36, Dex 9, Con 26, Int 3, Wis 8, Cha 3.

The special attacks and qualities of the tendriculos can be found on page 175 of the *Monster Manual*.

***Ad Hoc XP:** Due to the size of the tendriculos, award the PCs double normal experience if they defeat it.

Tactics: Once the tendriculos detects prey within range of its grasp, it snaps its tendrils out to snag its meal. If the prey cannot be caught on the first try, the tendriculos heaves itself up for pursuit. The process of tearing itself loose from the ground takes 1 round because it is so firmly rooted. The entire hill thus bulges up and starts to move. The tendriculos is too large to fit through the pentagonal *portal*, but one of its 30-foot-long tendrils can easily be shoved through. If the *portal* shuts downs while the tendriculos has a tendril in the archway, the *portal* will shove the tendril (and anything it holds) back into the High Forest.

Portal 4 (Thunder Peaks)

There is no map for this location. Once used by the Netherese military to strike at enemies in the forested regions south of their empire, this *portal* exits from a sheer wall carved into the western side of a mountain in the Thunder Peaks. The dense, eastern verge of the Hullack Forest surrounds the spot. Read the following when the characters go through:

> You look out into a thick, primeval forest. The air is warm and smells of earth, bark, decaying plants, and other rich woodland odors. The ground slopes down away from you, as if you were looking down a large hill.
>
> A veritable army of orcs, all staring at you among the trees from their side of the portal, confronts you. One of the orcs roars a one-word command, and a dozen orcs suddenly rush toward you, weapons raised and screaming war cries. They appear to have been expecting you.

These are Thunder Peaks orcs. Each orc has two crossed lightning bolts painted on his shield, with a glowing red eye painted over the spot where the bolts join. Many of these orcs were recently driven from Cormyr, and some took part in the looting and burning of Arabel before they withdrew months ago. These orcs use a lot of armor and weaponry taken from the bodies of dead Cormyrians.

Creatures (EL 6 for the first wave of twelve orcs): Twelve orcs charge through the *portal*. Unless they were warned ear-

ORCS OF THE THUNDER PEAKS

A small army of orcs camps in the Thunder Peaks (see Portal 4 for details.) Characters who run afoul of these ill-tempered orcs could find themselves in grave peril, indeed.

Leading this army is an orcish half-dragon named Cressyl Blackbones. Cressyl has red skin and carries with him an ashen stench. His yellow fangs and empty left eye socket add to his fearsome presence. In battle, he wields a *+1 dire flail*, and with him at all times is his pet howler, Spike.

Cressyl's advisor is a half-orc evoker named Tharlock the Elfscourge. The wizard lost his weasel familiar in the siege of Arabel and has been in a foul mood ever since.

The remainder of Cressyl's legion consists of orc fighters and standard orcs, as well as several trained wolves. A party of 6th-level characters would be well advised to avoid a direct confrontation with the orc army.

Cressyl Blackbones, Male Half-orc/Half-red dragon Ftr8: CR 10; Medium-size Dragon (6 ft. 10 in. tall); HD 8d10+48; hp 92; Init +0; Spd 20 ft. (base 30 ft.); AC 24 (+8 armor, +6 natural); Atk +16/+11 melee (1d8+12/1d8+12 [x2], *+1 dire flail* with Weapon Focus and Weapon Specialization feats); or +14/+9 melee (1d6, bite), +9/+4 melee (1d4+6 [x2], 2 claws); or +9/+4 ranged (1d6+6, masterwork throwing axe or javelin); SA breath weapon 1/day (30-foot-long cone of fire; DC 19; 6d10 points of damage); SQ fire immunity, immune to sleep and paralysis, low-light vision, darkvision 60 ft.; AL CE; SV Fort +12, Ref +4 (includes Lightning Reflexes feat), Will +4 (includes Iron Will feat); Str 22, Dex 11, Con 22, Int 12, Wis 11, Cha 17.

Skills: Climb +14, Handle Animal +8, Jump +13, Listen +3 (includes Alertness feat), Ride +4, Spot +3 (includes Alertness feat), Swim +10. *Feats:* Cleave, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (dire flail), Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Power Attack, Sunder, Weapon Focus (dire flail), Weapon Specialization (dire flail).

Possessions: +1 half-plate, +1 dire flail, masterwork throwing axe, 3 masterwork javelins, *+2 amulet of natural armor*.

Spike (Howler): hp 47; *Monster Manual* 121.

Tharlock the Elfscourge, Male Half-orc Wiz(Evo)5: CR 5; Medium-size Humanoid (6 ft. 5 in. tall); HD 5d4+10; hp 23; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 15 (+1 Dex, *+4 bracers of armor*) or 22 (as above, with *shield* spell); Atk +2 melee or +3 ranged (1d4/crit 19 20, masterwork dagger); SQ darkvision 60 ft.; AL CE; SV Fort +3, Ref +2, Will +7 (includes Iron Will feat); Str 10, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 16, Wis 13, Cha 9.

Skills: Alchemy +8, Concentration +10, Knowledge (arcana) +8, Search +5, Sense Motive +6, Spellcraft +11. *Feats:* Brew Potion, Craft Wondrous Item, Iron Will, Scribe Scroll.

Possessions: +4 bracers of armor, potion of bull's strength, 2 potions of invisibility, potion of fly, scroll of *see invisibility*, spellbook containing all prepared spells plus *invisibility*.

Spells Prepared (5/5/4/3, save DC = 13 + spell level): 0—*detect magic, detect poison, flare* (x2), *read magic*; 1st—*cause fear, expeditious retreat, magic missile* (x2), *shield*; 2nd—*bull's strength, darkness, flaming sphere, protection from arrows*; 3rd—*fireball, fly, lightning bolt*. Cannot cast Conjuration spells.

Orc Ftr2 (12): CR 2; hp 13 each; see "The Stonelands Ruins, Ground Level" for complete statistics and equipment.

Orcs (186): CR 1/2; hp 5 each; *Monster Manual* 146.

lier of an attack, the orcs believed—until the PCs appeared—that six of their number were guarding the Nexus Room. (They haven't looked there in a while.) These Thunder Peaks orcs are ready and eager for battle against any human foe. Their previous victories over the Cult of the Dragon members have given them courage.

Orcs (12): hp 5 each; *Monster Manual* 146. Note that these orcs each wear breastplates (rather than scale mail), giving them AC 15. They also carry longbows (rather than javelins).

Possessions: Breastplate (taken from a slain Cormyrian), greataxe, short sword, longbow with 12 arrows.

Development: Another two hundred orcs inhabit this camp (see the "Orcs of the Thunder Peaks" sidebar on the adjacent page for statistics). In a pile about 30 feet to one side of the *portal* are nineteen human and half-elven bodies, stripped of their black armor and gear. The black tattoo of the Cult of the Dragon can be seen on the upper left arm of each one. This was the main force of cultists that attacked here one day before the PCs reached the Stonelands ruins. All were slain, although many orcs also died in the attack.

Portal 5 (Dragonmere)

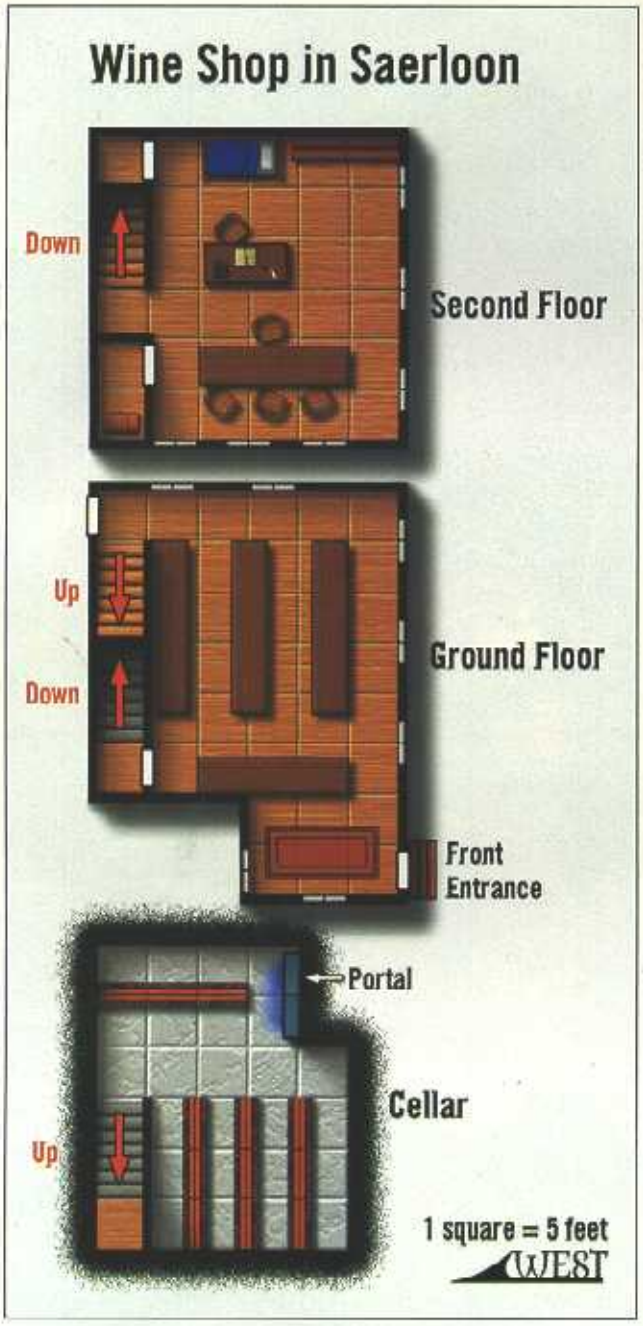
There is no map for this location. This *portal* leads to the top of a circular, 300-foot-diameter, horizontal *wall of force* that hovers 220 feet over the Lake of Dragons. At the moment the PCs exit this *portal*, the platform (once used for research and spying) is deep inside a large passing cloud. Lighting conditions depend on the time of day and illumination carried.

Stepping through the archway, you cannot see farther than a dozen feet in front of you. A thick fog blows around you and blots out the rest of the world. You can tell that you are treading on rough ground made up of muddy soil and rock. The sound of the wind fills your ears, and the moderately cool breeze has the taste and smell of seawater—not salty, but fresh, like the Sea of Fallen Stars, Wyvernwater, or the Dragonmere.

As you move about, you see piles of large branches scattered about, some burned into charcoal and others appearing to have been chopped apart with axes. The bones and skulls of various large animals are also present. You recognize old horse skulls and deer antlers among the debris. Some of the bones are broken open and scarred by knives or claws. Everything has the look of having been recently tossed here, like a debris pile by a construction area.

The pentagonal archway here was deliberately made invisible by Netherese wizards to keep its location a secret, making it useful for spying to the south using flying magic or winged mounts. It can be touched and felt, and the warning tone from it can be heard when it is about to cease functioning. It is otherwise undetectable. The archway's exit faces north, the only direction through which it can be entered. (The other side of the archway is solid, as usual.) The archway is in the exact center of the circular *wall of force*.

Thanks to cloud cover and recent rainfall, the whole surface of the invisible platform is wet and slick. Also, thanks to the Thunder Peaks orcs who made this spot their dumping ground, much of the surface is covered by a thin layer of mud. The main danger here lies in walking too near the edge and falling off, if no dirt is present to show where the edge lies, or



possibly slipping in the mud and sliding off while running. A Spot check (DC 20) in the fog will reveal the very edge of the platform ahead of a walking character if mud covers it (60% chance). Walking on the surface is quite precarious due to the mud and precipitation, requiring a successful Balance check (DC 12) from each PC who wants to keep her feet each round of combat or each minute of "normal" time. A PC who fails this check falls prone in the square she occupies. Failing the check by more than five within 5 feet of the edge of the wall indicates that the PC has slipped over the edge. She must then make a successful Reflex save (DC 12) or plummet 220 feet to the water below (see the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, pages 112-113, for falling damage rules).

Anyone who pokes or probes the ground notices that a very solid surface lies just below the layer of dirt. Further examination reveals that, once the dirt is wiped aside, the PCs appear to be standing on a gigantic plate of glass hovering high over an ocean. This might provoke great consternation among the adventurers and lead to them using a great deal of caution while moving around, though they cannot break the *wall of force* without some spell or device that destroys or negates magic effects.

This location has no dangers other than falling off the edge. You might have a few winged terrors drop by in a few days, however, if they notice the floating mound of dirt. The southern coast of Cormyr is eight miles from this spot. Marsember, the nearest city, lies about twelve miles to the northwest.

Portal 6 (Saerloon)

This *portal* exits inside a wine cellar in the Sembian seaport of Saerloon. Read or paraphrase the following when the PCs travel through this *portal*:

> On the other side of the portal is a cool, dark room that smells of mildew—and, oddly, some kind of sweet, alcoholic beverage like wine. No source of light is present.

This *portal* leads to a small, brick-walled cellar with a packed dirt floor. The ceiling is made from thick wood and appears to be part of a building's ground floor. Directly in front of the *portal* is a wooden wine rack with 26 bottles of Sembian vintage. In fact, the wax label on each bottle has a note, "Bottled in Saerloon," along the bottom. The cellar has a stairway leading up and three more wine racks that hold another 142 bottles of Sembian wine, all bottled in Saerloon by various vintners.

Trap (EL 5): The *portal* archway has been trapped by a spell that attacks anyone coming through it with electric shocks. The first living creature to come through the *portal* takes 8d6 points of damage; the next one through takes 6d6 points, the third one 4d6, and the fourth 2d6. Thereafter, the spell has ended. A successful Reflex saving throw (DC 14) halves the damage. This trap cannot be detected in the usual manner, as it is on the exit side of the *portal*; a *detect magic* spell cast before walking through, however, reveals that the area within the archway on the far side has a peculiar shimmer to it (a moderate Transmutation aura).

Electricity Trap: CR 5; first creature through trapped area takes 8d6 points of electrical damage, second takes 6d6 points of electrical damage, third takes 4d6 points of electrical damage, and fourth takes 2d6 points of damage; Reflex save (DC 14) halves; only *detect magic* spell can detect; Disable Device (DC 23).

Creature (EL 10): Also in the cellar, waiting quietly out of sight of the PCs, is a lookout. He is a member of the Cult of the Dragon, whose Saerloon chapter has its headquarters in this small wine shop. The history of how the cultists here started the trouble with the *portal* system is told in "How the *Portal* Network Was Activated." Bresnos, the cultist, will be warned of the party's approach the instant that the archway on his side activates, 1 round before the *portal* fully opens. He uses his *dust of disappearance*, then prepares to strike at anyone who survives the **Trap** and wanders into the cellar.

This cultist rogue volunteered to stay behind and guard the *portal* in the wine shop, while the other cultists organize a third attack force into the *portal* system. He is willing to die fighting rather than retreat, and he would prefer to fight in darkness than in light.

Bresnos Huantilar, Male Human Rog10: CR 10; Medium-size Humanoid (5 ft. 3 in. tall); HD 10d6+20; hp 59; Init +8 (+4 Dex, Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft.; AC 20 (+4 armor, +1 buckler, +1 *ring of protection*, +4 Dex); Atk +11/+6 melee (1d6+2/crit 17-20, *+1 keen short sword* with Weapon Focus feat), or +12/+7 ranged (1d4+2 plus poison/crit 19-20, thrown dagger with Weapon Focus feat); SA sneak attack (+5d6); SQ evasion, uncanny dodge, special ability (feat); AL NE; SV Fort +5, Ref +11, Will +3; Str 14, Dex 18, Con 14, Int 12, Wis 10, Cha 11.

Skills: Climb +10, Decipher Script +6, Disable Device +7, Escape Artist +5, Hide +10, Intimidate +6, Jump +10, Listen +10, Knowledge (Cult of the Dragon) +4, Move Silently +10, Open Lock +5, Pick Pocket +5, Search +8, Spot +10, Swim +10, Use Rope +4. *Feats:* Alertness, Blind-Fight (special ability), Improved Initiative, Quick Draw, Weapon Focus (dagger), Weapon Focus (short sword).

Possessions: +2 leather armor, +1 keen shortsword, +1 ring of protection, dust of disappearance (2 uses), masterwork buckler, 2 daggers coated with large scorpion venom, 2 vials of large scorpion venom (DC 18; initial and secondary 1d6 Str).

Development: The little shop presently is closed, its doors locked and windows shuttered. A sign on the front door says the owner has gone on vacation but will return in a few weeks to make repairs and reopen. What's actually happened is that the survivors of the Cult of the Dragon here have gone for help and will return in about a month's time with reinforcements from other cult centers. The cult members took with them the metal plates describing in detail how the *portal* system works. However, a copy of the text on the plates was buried in this wine cellar beneath the floor stone where the plates were originally found.

A successful Search check (DC 20) reveals the hiding place where the papers, wrapped in waxed cloth, are now kept. The papers tell how to close down the entire *portal* network so that it cannot be used until a second procedure is followed to start up the *portals* again. Thus, the cultists could reactivate the *portal* network at a later time even if the PCs close it down for now. A long struggle over the *portals* is almost certain.

Portal 7 (East of Wheloon)

There is no map for this location. This *portal* is set in a stone wall, nearly all that remains of a temple of Tyche. The temple is on the outskirts of the village of Monksblade, astride the Way of the Manticore about halfway between Wheloon and the Vast Swamp. Read or paraphrase the following to the players when they pass through this *portal:*

> You look out into what appears to be the ruined foundation of an old stone building. Tall grass grows in the large rectangle formed by the stonework, which rises only a couple of feet above the ground and is a foot thick. The square foundation shows three gaps where doors must once have stood, and it runs about 40 feet along each side. The portal appears to be set in the middle of one foundation wall.
>
> Stepping out of the portal, you see that you are on a hilltop in an overgrown field, with scattered trees and bushes around. The pentagonal archway seems to have been made part of one wall of an old building, mortared into the surrounding stonework. Now, only the archway and some of the wall around it remain standing.

Once the *portal* has closed, anyone staying in the ruins and looking at the pentagonal archway notices that the stone wall in the back of the pentagon, which vanishes when the *portal* is opened, was long ago painted with a large, red triangle, point down. A narrow, five-pointed star (also in red) springs from the triangle's center, its points touching the angles inside the archway. A large, corroded halo of metal surrounds the arch, mounted on the remains of the stone wall. Anyone who makes a successful Knowledge (religion) check (DC 23) recognizes this as a symbol of the now-dead goddess Tyche (a silver coin with a red star on one side and a red triangle on the other). Some places in central Cormyr, particularly around the village of Monksblade, were well known for their temples to Tyche in ancient Cormyrian times.

The temple was built here around the archway, which was abandoned by the Netherese but not destroyed by enemy non-humans, who didn't know what to do with it. Tycheans thought the pentagonal arch was a sign that they should build a small temple here, so they did. The temple was destroyed long ago by a group of evil wizards who rampaged through this region, stealing from various temples before they were slain. The ruins are still visited by adventurers who toss copper coins into the grassy area blocked by the foundation in hopes of gaining good luck. A successful Spot check (DC 15) reveals many dozens of such coins over the ground. These can be collected without harm (132 cp total); nearly all are Cormyrian in make, though some are centuries old.

If the PCs appear here in the daytime, they have nothing to fear right away. The Way of the Manticore, a one-lane dirt road, is at the bottom of the hill. Something smells bad in the air, like a creature died hereabouts recently. On the way down the hill through the tall grass, PCs must roll Spot checks (DC 13) to discover the decaying bodies of eight orcs, all bearing shield designs common to orcs of the Thunder Peaks. The bodies fell in a line leading from the road to part way up the slope to the temple ruins. The orcs nearest the top of the hill seem to have been running when they died. The bloated bodies, though exposed to outdoor air and insects for several days by this time, have no signs of violence on them. A few of the bodies appear to have been examined earlier by other people, probably merchants and wayfarers coming up from the road, then left alone.

Except for distant farms, no one lives around here. The nearest settlement, Monksblade, lies two miles west and is a quiet Cormyrian spot with superb food and sleeping accommodations. Recently, a popular if spooky local "attraction" has been acting oddly, and no one will come out at night anymore for any reason. Locals call the problem the "Looking Lady"—the ghost of a skull-faced woman that was once relatively harmless but is now attacking everyone.

If the PCs open the *portal* here after sunset, to either arrive or depart, they quickly find out what the problem is. Only 2d4 minutes after the *portal* opens, the Looking Lady arrives. She wants to get through the open *portal* as fast as possible so she can get back to her home on Opus using the Nexus Room (see description of *Portal* 2). If confronted, she attacks in a violent, hysterical manner, trying to slay everyone near her.

As noted earlier, the Looking Lady cannot operate the *portals* in her present condition. She soundlessly commands bystanders to do this for her, without telling anyone the formula for doing so. If she is not obeyed within 2d4 rounds, she

The Looking Lady, Female Human Ghost Sor6: CR 8; Medium-size Undead (Incorporeal); HD 6d12; hp 45; Init +3 (Dex); Spd 30 ft., fly 30 ft. (perfect); AC 17 (+4 deflection, +3 Dex); Atk +6 melee (1d4, corrupting touch); SA corrupting touch, horrific appearance, manifestation, spells; SQ incorporeal, rejuvenation, +4 turn resistance, undead; AL NE; SV Fort +2, Ref +5, Will +5; Str 11, Dex 17, Con —, Int 16, Wis 11, Cha 18.

Skills: Concentration +10, Knowledge (Netherese magic) +10, Hide +8, Listen +17, Search +18, Spellcraft +10, Spot +18; *Feats:* Alertness, Silent Spell, Spell Penetration, Still Spell.

Spells Known (6/7/6/4; base DC = 14 + spell level): 0—*dancing lights, detect magic, flare, ghost sound, mage hand, prestidigitation, read magic;* 1st—*chill touch, magic missile, shield, silent image;* 2nd—*fog cloud, spectral hand;* 3rd—*hold person.*

See page 212 in the *Monster Manual* for descriptions of ghost special abilities, and page 6 in the *Monster Manual* for information on incorporeal undead.

Portal 9 (North of Arabel)

There is no map for this location. This *portal* lies twenty-eight miles north of Arabel, in a thicket of trees due west of the nearby trade route, nestled in the foothills of the Stormhorn Mountains. That is, the *portal* would let people exit at this spot if the entire archway were not encased in a thin blanket of lead, then buried in mortar and stone! The lead and stone were added to block *detect magic* spells and keep the existence of the *portal* a secret. The Netherese of Blister had nothing to do with the above changes, however.

> As the portal opens, you are confronted with what looks like a dull gray wall, blocking your passage through. The wall seems to be metallic.

The lead wall is thin and soft enough that it can be cut away with a knife, but behind it is a mortared wall of stone (2 ft. thick, Break DC 40, hardness 8, hp 120). If the PCs manage to break through it, read or paraphrase the following boxed text:

> It becomes apparent, looking through the portal, that there is an immediate drop-off as one passes through. The ground is about 7 feet down, a grassy spot in the middle of a thicket of old trees.
>
> After reaching the ground and looking up again at the hole in the stone wall through which you passed, you see that the portal archway was moved at some time in the past

attacks for 1d4 rounds, then again tries to order everyone to help her. This cycle repeats until either she is destroyed, her victims escape, or she is aided as she wishes. If she is allowed to go through the *portal* system to Portal 2 (she knows which *portal* leads to her old home), she flees through the archway onto the debris-strewn hill that is left of Opus in Anauroch and instantly vanishes. Her spirit is laid to rest, never to return.

Creature (EL 8): The Looking Lady, who appears only at night, attacks anyone who delays her from reaching an open *portal.* She does not speak or make any sound, and she does not understand any "modern" language, though she can make hand gestures to try to communicate.

and remounted. It is now buried in the middle of a large stone-and-mortar monolith, a kind of marker shaped like a giant rectangular tombstone or a section of a town wall. The dark gray, timeworn monolith is 12 feet high, 9 feet wide, and 6 feet thick. If one steps back into the surrounding trees, a large, sculpted stone head and shoulders can be seen capping the monument, adding another 6 feet to the monument's height. The stone head has a wide grin on it, as if it were viewing some unusually amusing scene.

After leaving the encircling trees, the PCs see that they are in a region of low hills and scattered trees, very much like the northern part of Cormyr (which is exactly where this is). The monument is the Laughing Head, a notorious landmark whose reputation is widely known to locals of this area, and PCs who make a successful Knowledge (local) check (DC 15). Supposedly, when the light of the rising moon falls upon the head at a certain time of year (most people say in the winter), the head speaks a cryptic challenge. The puzzle, combined with certain words that appear on the front of the monument at that time, are clues to a hidden place or thing. The monument is known to be old, probably older than Cormyr itself. Further specifics are impossible to come by. Many up-and-coming heroes in Cormyr have seen the Laughing Head at least once in their lives and tried to figure out its importance.

This *portal* was originally built here and made invisible by Netherese wizards planning to use it to ambush nonhumans in the area. Like many other *portals*, this one was shut down to prevent it from being taken over, then forgotten after the fall of Netheril. The stone monument encasing the *portal* archway was built by an Asram archmage, Zaros, who happened by about three centuries later, in -33 D.R. The archmage was dying of a dreadful disease that was swiftly destroying his homeland, a survivor state of Netheril.

Having earlier found the archway and made it visible again, Zaros knew enough of Netheril's magic to rework some of the spells on the *portal* so that, in addition to wherever else it led (which was of no concern to him), it would also serve as a *portal* to his burial place. The archmage was a master astrologer and astronomer, and he used the Blister-linked *portal* to create a more powerful *portal* that would lead from Toril straight to its giant satellite, Selûne, when the light of the midwinter full moon fell upon the *portal*. In a desolate canyon on Selûne, the archmage built a mansionlike mausoleum. This done, Zaros passed through the *portal*, which he activated in the standard way on a moonlit midwinter night, then used magic to sheath the *portal* on Toril in lead to prevent its quick discovery. Magic also finished mortaring the archway into the monument, whose resemblance to a tombstone was deliberate. Zaros went to his crypt on Selûne, where he entombed himself with his possessions and died, his body preserved by his spells.

Zaros left an inscription on the monument, written in the ancient tongue of Netheril, and designed it to appear only during the light of the full moon on or about Midwinter Night. A *comprehend languages* spell is sufficient to translate the writing. The inscription gives hints to the operation of the *portal* and where it leads, but the clues are cryptic. To discover a secret place of rest "beneath the light of the world," the traveler must wait for a "cold moon," disrobe, then use one hand and a command ("Part the veil of the universe for me!") to travel there. Zaros meant for the traveler to first wait for a full midwinter moon to shine down, which would activate the conditions necessary to make the *portal* open on Selûne instead of anywhere else. The traveler must then "disrobe" (remove the stones and lead sheath from) the monument, dig out the *portal*, place a hand on the archway, and speak the key phrase to activate the *portal*. The place of rest (Zaros's crypt) lies beneath the light of the world (Toril, hanging directly overhead in Selûne's sky). One can imagine the antics adventurers have gone through over the years trying to make sense of the inscription and make it work.

The laughing head and shoulders on top of the monument were added by a still later individual—unfortunately a powerful cleric of Moander the Darkbringer, in 26 D.R. (The Year of Opening Doors). The monument was already known to humans in the region, though no one suspected its true purpose. The cleric, Orgur Thok, was also known to the locals and the infant kingdom of Cormyr, created just that year and consisting only of Suzail and the land around it in the south. Orgur was sought by the royal Obarskyr family on charges of murder and plotting against the crown. While hiding out, Orgur secretly studied the monument and figured out how to get to the *portal* and operate it. He then decided to use Zaros's mansion-tomb on Selûne as his secret refuge, from which he could strike back at a future time and destroy those who sought his death. On a whim, he added the large sculpted head with its absurd grin to the monument and enchanted it so that it would magically speak and be understood by everyone within 90 feet of it, at the same time Zaros's inscription appeared.

The head's cryptic challenge was designed to confuse anyone trying to solve the original inscription, to prevent the monument from being used to reach Orgur's hideaway. A careful study of the monument using a dwarf's stonecunning, Knowledge (architecture and engineering) (DC 20), or Profession (stone-mason) (DC 18) reveals the head was added as a separate feature some time after the monument was built.

The head's cryptic challenge is often interpreted in the following way: An ancient evil seeks the destruction of the "southern kingdom," and to stop it, a hero must take the "king's heart," then follow the rest of the instructions on the monument. The idea here was to trick foolish heroes into killing or stealing from the king of Cormyr, perhaps even kidnapping family members who might be his "heart." If anyone brought such items to the monument and actually figured out how to open the *portal*, Orgur would be happy to take the offered items, kill whoever brought them to him, and use the items against Cormyr.

Orgur opened the monument *portal* and fled to Selûne before he could be captured or slain by Cormyrian soldiers. Using a *wish* spell, he repaired the damage to the monument and lead sheath, so it was left just as he had found it. However, Orgur did not count on two things. First, the heroes of Cormyr are generally so patriotic that they nearly always discount the idea that their king should be attacked; they instead try to interpret the grinning head's spoken words in extremely esoteric and symbolic ways. For example, the head might really have said the "king's hart," the largest deer in the realm, or it might just mean "courage," which a king (or adventurer) should have in abundance. Many believe the "southern kingdom" is not Cormyr but some other place south of it, further confusing the issue. The Obarskyr family has long ceased worrying that someone will assassinate the king to take his heart,

but the monument is checked now and then by wizards working for the realm. What became of the evil cleric was never learned, though divination spells indicated Orgur died soon after he vanished. Orgur vanished from the pages of history as well, except in old Cormyrian tomes kept by the Obarskyr family, Candlekeep, and a few other places. Of Zaros, no written record remains.

Second, the lethal disease that killed Zaros was still active. It was magically created by the goddess Talona ages ago and designed to slay an entire kingdom in a month's time. She meant for the disease to vanish on Toril after a certain point, so she tailored it to quickly become completely extinct; moreover, it cannot be spread on Toril if it is reintroduced by some means. Though the disease vanished on Toril, the spells Zaros used to preserve his body in death also kept the disease alive inside him, particularly as he was no longer on Toril—a loophole in Talona's creation of the disease. Orgur was in the process of moving his assorted belongings into the mansion-tomb when he disturbed Zaros's body and infected himself. The progress of the disease was extremely rapid. Orgur soon realized what had happened and tried to flee his new home, but he died attempting to open the great, heavy iron doors to the mansion-mausoleum.

Development: Anyone opening the two great doors of the mausoleum will find Orgur's mummified remains on the floor, curled up. The cause of death is not obvious, and neither is Orgur's identity. Among Orgur's effects are books and papers about his worship of Moander and his actions in ancient times, as well as his plot to come to Selûne and use Zaros's tomb as his base. Nothing was written about his disease, although he speculates that Zaros was one of the last survivors of Asram.

ASRAM PLAGUE

Disease	Infection	DC	Incubation	Damage
Asram Plague	All vectors*	20	2d4 days	1 Str, 1 Con

*Contact, ingested, inhaled (within 30 feet of live or dead infected person), and injury. However, this applies only on Selûne. On Toril, the disease cannot be spread by any means, though a person who has the disease still suffers its full effects.

A Fortitude saving throw with a -4 penalty is required of any creature that risks infection by Asram Plague every hour it is exposed. An infected creature must make a new Fortitude save every day to prevent damage. Three successful checks in a row stop the disease, but recovery is impossible without magical healing.

An infected character notices nothing during incubation except feeling a little more tired and cold than usual. Once the incubation period ends, the character feels chills, lassitude, and weakness in the limbs. These symptoms grow worse over time. No external symptoms appear until ten days after the incubation period ends, when a strange amber fluid begins seeping from the affected person's (now yellow) eyes. This might be recognized as symbolic of Talona. However, approaching any of Talona's followers to ask for a cure has an unexpected effect. "Golden tears" are thought by Talonites to be an irreversible death mark, and even Talona's clerics will flee if they see this, offering no help at all and wishing only to save themselves.

Zaros's papers and books offer extensive information on astrology and astronomy, invaluable to sages and some wizards. You can decide what specific magic items and other personal effects are in the mansion-tomb, as well as the tomb's actual layout (should the PCs find their way here).

Only one or two magic items are present, of an ancient make. However, the papers and books are all perfectly preserved, if brittle, and would be worth thousands of gold pieces to a sage, wizard, historian, librarian, or collector. Candlekeep would pay out a minimum of 35,000 gp for the lot, although transportation would prove quite a problem.

Asram Plague, as it is called here, affects only humans and part-humans (half-elves, half-orcs, and so on). Statistics, per the *Dungeon Master's Guide* (pages 74-75), are in the "Asram Plague" sidebar below.

Remember that the *portal* opens to Selûne only if it is activated under the Midwinter full moon. At any other time, the *portal* opens back to the Nexus Room. As this adventure takes place in midsummer, the PCs have a while to wait before this part of the adventure continues—but they have plenty of time to bone up on the monument's legend before visiting it later.

Shutting Down The Portal System

The *portal* system can be temporarily deactivated only from the Nexus Room. The notes written by the Cult of the Dragon member in Saerloon show that to close a *portal*, a wizard must cast *read magic* and say aloud the rune words written around the pentagonal archway. A metallic magic item must then be touched to the arch. This causes the item to immediately be stripped of its magic, and the *portal* cannot be activated again in the normal way. Only by speaking the rune words aloud once more, in reverse order, and touching another sacrificial magic item to the archway (which also loses its magic) allows the *portal* to be reactivated. Reading the runes around the pentagonal archway takes 1 minute. A wizard can create a spur-of-the-moment magic item by casting a spell like *light* on a metal coin, which will serve nicely.

Concluding The Adventure

Once the PCs have gained control of the *portals* and shut them down to prevent further abuse, they should go back to the army camp at the Black Crater and report to Captain Dunman. Encounters along the way are at your discretion; goblin raiders are common this time of year. The captain will not send any assistance to the PCs in the form of soldiers, spellcasters, horses, and so forth. She will take their verbal reports, have them transcribed, and send those along to Lord Hawklin. She will request a force of Purple Dragons come to seize control of the *portal* network if the PCs have no interest in holding it.

To the chagrin of the party, everyone's paperwork will be checked again once the group returns to the camp. Any irregularities will result in arrest, though if the party obviously did a good job, the captain might be lenient and merely send the PCs home with a letter of complaint and a reprimand, with a penalty fee assessed. Any papers the PCs bring back, such as those showing how the *portal* system operates, will be copied and sent back to Suzail.

Those members of the group returning to Suzail (assuming no one stays behind to "hold the fort") can go home within a day of reaching the camp at the Black Crater, using the intermittent *portal* there. A page in the service of Lord Hawklin will

ENCOUNTER LEVEL CHART

Summarized below are the Encounter Levels (EL) for all the encounters in "The Door From Everywhere." Four 6th-level PCs should garner enough XP from these encounters to reach 7th level. Although many of the encounters have an EL higher than 6, the PCs have the option to rest and heal between encounters.

Area	Encounter Description	EL
*	Male Orc Ftr2 (3)	6
	Wolves (2)	
**	Male Orc Ftr2 (8)	8
***	Two-headed Griffon (1)	5
P1	Lord Gargdol, Male Human Ftr7	9
	Ogres (3)	
P2	Basilisk (1)	5
P3	Gargantuan Tendriculos (1)	8
P4	Orcs (12)	6
	Cressyl Blackbones, Male Half-dragon Ftr8	10+
	Spike, Howler (1)	
	Tharlock the Elfscourge, Male Half-orc Wiz(Evo)5	
	Orc Ftr2 (12)	
	Orcs (186)	
P6	Electricity Trap	5
	Bresnos Huantilar, Human Rog10	10
P7	The Looking Lady, Human Ghost Sor6	8

* Stoneland Ruins: Ground Level
** Stoneland Ruins: Lower Level
*** Nexus Room

be present at the Court's *portal* room to escort the PCs to their lord. Lord Hawklin is glad to see them return, especially if they have much news, tales of adventure, proof of their travels, and so on. The PCs notice that Lord Hawklin has a fresh scar on one cheek, about which he says nothing except to sigh and change the subject. (The Steel Regent accidentally gave it to him in a fit of rage.) Payment for the adventure is quickly made, though the PCs are reminded once more of their oaths of loyalty and secrecy, particularly about the *portals*.

IN THE LONG RUN . . .

The best outcome, from the Cormyrian government's point of view, would be to have the PCs or someone else hold the Stonelands ruins and allow the War Wizards to explore the *portal* system. The site, if not taken by the PCs, will be held by a significant force of Purple Dragons and War Wizards, who build defenses around it and look for ways to make good use of the *portal* system to aid Cormyr's recovery. In time, military strikes using Portal 4 can be made against the orcs in the Thunder Peaks; Portals 1, 7, and 9 can be fortified and used for moving troops rapidly across the realm. Portals 2, 3, and 5 will largely be left alone except for adventuring missions sponsored by the crown. Portal 6, opening as it does into Sembia, will be used exclusively for spy missions.

Even if the PCs wish to use the ruins as their future home, building their own fortification there, the War Wizards insist on keeping partial control and ownership of the *portal* network, as it is too risky to allow such rapid access to the heart of Cormyr from its borders. Rebellious nobles, assassins, foreign spies, evil nonhumans, and bandits would all love control of the *portals* for their own purposes. If word of the *portal* system leaks out, attacks against the site are certain to occur.

Once the PCs return to Suzail, they might be sought out by untrustworthy nobles, foreign spies, and other adventuring groups who make it their business to chat with anyone seen to have business with the crown. You can play out the consequences of such encounters, remembering that the crown hates oathbreakers, spies, and traitors.

Perhaps the worst outcome of the adventure would be the return of the Cult of the Dragon members to their *portal* in a month's time. From Saerloon, they will certainly do all they can to strike back at the heroes and Cormyr itself, as well as the troublesome orcs of the Thunder Peaks. The cultists assemble a powerful retaliatory force, perhaps complete with a dracolich or two, and try to reclaim the Nexus Room.

THE OTHER PORTALS

You can expand this adventure by activating more of the *portals* in the Nexus Room. You will need to determine each destination as well as what might be waiting for PCs on the other side. Here are some ideas based on adventure hooks presented in the *FORGOTTEN REALMS Campaign Setting* sourcebook:

Portal 8: The Haunted Halls of Eveningstar (page 295). The *portal* is tucked away in some craftily concealed corner of the underground fortress, as yet undiscovered.

Portal 10: Citadel of the Raven (page 160). If the Zhents inhabiting this outpost are aware of the *portal*, they might have a chained hydra or some other creature waiting to devour unwanted interlopers.

Portal 11: Aencar's Manor (page 121). The *portal* occupies a chamber beneath the haunted ruins that has just recently been excavated and seized by the Cult of the Dragon. The cultists recognize the importance of the *portal* but haven't been able to activate it from this side yet.

Portal 12: Myth Drannor (page 124). The *portal* is located beneath an ancient ruin inhabited by a band of drow shadowdancers. These dark elves are searching for a relic of Lolth hidden in Myth Drannor centuries ago.

Portal 13: The Vast Swamp (page 112). A mad beholder named Xibalgar recently found a way to repair this *portal*, which broke into three pieces after sinking into the marsh. Xibalgar fancies itself a collector of "beholder artifacts" and has convinced a tribe of lizardfolk to transport the newly repaired *portal* overland to its new lair in the foothills of the Thunder Peaks.

Portal 14: Scimitar Spires (page 99). Floating between three of these dark, obelisklike peaks is a basalt tower—a Netherese remnant recently thrust into the sky by a wizard shade. The shade is experimenting with the newly recovered *portal*.

Portal 15: The Dragonmere (page 142). This *portal* sits at the bottom of the lake, in the flooded treasure cave of a dragon turtle, wereshark, or some other aquatic creature.

Portal 16: Old Skull Inn (page 139). This *portal* exists in the Underdark deep below this popular adventurers' hangout. Ω

This is Roger's second appearance in DUNGEON Magazine. *(His first adventure, "Juggernaut," appeared in Issue #27.) By day, Roger raises giant hamsters on the asteroid city of Bral. By night, he dabbles in eldritch magic, hoping to unlock portals to far-flung worlds both wondrous and benign.*

~KENNON~
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Thirds of Purloined Vellum

Sometimes Paper is More Valuable than Gold

by Graham Robert Scott

artwork by Kennon James • cartography by Christopher West

"Thirds of Purloined Vellum" is a D&D adventure for four good-aligned 1st-level characters. DMs should find it easy to tailor the adventure for higher level characters. The scenario is set in Athkatla, the capital of Amn in the FORGOTTEN REALMS campaign setting, where agents from a distant thieves' guild have sabotaged a trade mission by stealing documents crucial to its completion. Adventurers can expect a mix of intrigue, problem solving, and roleplaying as they track down the agents.

The module isn't a linear dungeon crawl or rigid script, and the PCs might make unforeseen moves, so it works best for experienced DMs who like to think on their feet.

Magic Items · Monsters · Non-Player Characters (NPCs) · Objects · Settlements · Traps

Adventure Background

Athkatla, the capital of decadent Amn, enjoys more than its share of intrigue. Its streets are rife with skullduggery, espionage, backstabbing (both literal and figurative), and trade rivalries taken to dangerous extremes.

The reception was no different when Kathkallan, a prominent merchant and alderman of the Dragon Coast city of Teziir, came to town recently on a trade mission. The merchant hoped to close two deals that could improve his city's standing as an inner-sea trade power. Unfortunately, his dreams of financial conquest weren't to be; someone has sabotaged his attempts. This time, Athkatlan natives aren't behind the cloak-and-dagger behavior. Instead, the merchant has become the victim of forces employed by his fiercest trade rival.

Things didn't begin on a sour note. Until recently, everything looked rosy. Here are the events that led up to the situation to which the PCs are introduced:

• Kathkallan identified a rare substance coveted by Amn's wealthiest residents and came up with a way to provide it. He secretly established two giant bee farms, from which he hopes to cultivate royal jelly, a byproduct of giant bee colonies that's reputed to heal, cure disease, and alleviate the effects of aging.

• Kathkallan's royal jelly farms face little competition. In the past, the substance was brought to market by adventurers, not farmers. Since adventurers tend to destroy the hives in the process, Amn long ago depleted its jelly-producing colonies.

• Jasaar Arrasti, the head of a powerful Amnian merchant house specializing in perfumes and cosmetics, agreed in advance to buy Kathkallan's first shipment of royal jelly for 4,000 gp per half-pound jar.

• Kathkallan also acquired an option to buy 200 pounds of vanilla beans for 20,000 gp from Greater Galleon, an Athkatlan company. He hopes to buy the vanilla with proceeds from the jelly, then carry the spice back to Teziir for sale.

• A year after signing the contracts, Kathkallan's bee farms produced their first crop: nine jars of royal jelly.

• All nine jars survived the caravan trip from Teziir to Athkatla.

Everything fell apart when Kathkallan reached the capital. When the merchant arrived, he sent his journeyman, Galliad, to schedule meetings with both Arrasti and Greater Galleon while he arranged for the sale of a wagonload of wool (his cover story for the trip). He also asked Galliad to arrange for security on the trip back, either by signing on with a caravan or hiring guards. Galliad never returned.

Kathkallan's trade mission is now in jeopardy: To prove he represented his master, Galliad was carrying Kathkallan's contracts when he disappeared. The documents are irreplaceable.

Indeed, Kathkallan can't complete his trade mission without them: The other merchants pretend they don't remember ever making the deals unless confronted with their signatures. That's because, thanks to recent events in Amn, the terms of those contracts are no longer as favorable to the merchants of Athkatla as they once were.

Arrasti, for his part, is in a financial bind. He illicitly used his estate as collateral on two loans, each for a separate overseas venture. He was gambling that sales from the two shipments would cover the debts. But both vessels were lost to pirates, and monthly loan payments have nearly wiped out his reserves. Worried that one of his creditors will soon try to

SCALING THE ADVENTURE

Although set in the *FORGOTTEN REALMS* campaign setting, this adventure fits into any large city known as a magnet for trade.

In GREYHAWK campaigns, the City of Greyhawk works fine, as does Ekbir for DMs who want to maintain the pseudo-Arabian flavor of Athkatla. To make the switch, the DM should find another pair of trade rivals to replace Teziir and Westgate and use appropriate thieves' guilds in place of the Night Masks and Shadow Thieves. Athkatla's merchant houses can be replaced with powerful merchants and guilds.

The adventure is designed for 1st-level characters but can be easily adapted for higher-level parties by ramping up the levels of the villains.

- Mantatlus (the main villain) should remain three levels higher than the average party level.
- Catellion (Mantatlus's lieutenant) should be two levels higher than the average party level.
- Gil, Holm, and Anteashara should each be equal to the average party level.
- If the PCs are higher than 1st level on average, the thugs in the opening sequence should be rogues, each one level below the average party level.
- The DC of saving throws for some of the poisons and the pillars of Parthenope should be increased 1 point per level of the average party member.
- The listed payment for the party's mission should be multiplied by the party's level, as should the amounts of treasure found during the course of the adventure.

In addition to the above advice, DMs should consider the following pointers:

2nd- to 3rd-level PCs: If the party is having an easy time, give Mantatlus a number of hired 1st-level fighter mercenaries equal to the size of the party. (The mercenaries, however, should not know their employer is a Night Mask.)

4th- to 5th-level PCs: In addition to giving Mantatlus some mercenary guards, give the wizard the *animate dead* spell and assume he's created 18 Hit Dice worth of skeletons and zombies from victims of his garden. The undead remain below the soil until called by the wizard or disturbed by trespassers. Catellion, Gil, Holm, and Anteashara should also be equipped with a nastier variety of poisons.

6th- to 7th-level PCs: The DM can equip the Night Masks with magic items appropriate to their levels, add more lethal plants to the wizard's garden, and so forth. Catellion, Gil, Holm, and Anteashara might have a level or two as assassins instead of rogues. Also keep in mind the strategies open to a 9th- or 10th-level wizard like Mantatlus. He should use summoned creatures to fight, drop *confusion* spells on the party while they fend off undead (which are immune to the spell), and *teleport* back to Westgate if things get rough.

claim his estate and reveal his deception (ruining his credit and reputation in the process), Arrasti is desperate to rebuild his fortune quickly. Thus, the perfume merchant is particularly determined to squeeze every copper of profit out of any deal presented to him. Although he could double his money on the royal jelly even if he bought it at the contract price of 4,000 gp, he offers only 1,000 gp a jar unless presented with the written agreement.

Meanwhile, several shipments of vanilla were also lost at sea. As a result, speculation on the remaining vanilla has more than doubled street prices for the sweetener since Kathkallan negotiated his option. The option gives Kathkallan a substantial discount on Amn's hottest commodity because it binds Greater Galleon to an earlier, lower price.

Desperate to recover the contracts, Kathkallan and his bodyguard attempted to retrace Galliad's steps. At the start of the adventure, a day after Galliad's disappearance, they have walked into an ambush—and the PCs are there to see it.

For the Dungeon Master

Galliad is dead, lured into a trap by agents of Teziir's archrival: the city of Westgate. Teziir has long played second fiddle to Westgate when it comes to trade, and the latter city often takes drastic steps to ensure things remain that way. Wary of potential rivals, Westgate jealously guards its dominance in Dragon Coast trade through liberal use of its powerful thieves' guild, the Night Masks.

The Night Masks have stationed a team of five agents permanently in Athkatla (see "The Night Masks" sidebar). Among their other duties, they are under orders to foil any trade efforts between their host city and Teziir.

When Galliad went about his errands, he encountered one of the Night Masks, a woman named Anteashara. A permanent resident of the capital and an Amnian native who turned to the Night Masks at an early age, Anteashara works in town as a porter. In Athkatla, porters do more than just carry luggage. They act as coordinators, guides, messengers, and fetches.

As Galliad wandered through the market scheduling appointments, he encountered Anteashara, who offered her services. Eager to complete his assignments, Galliad asked her where he could find a caravan headed for the Dragon Coast.

Recognizing Galliad as a native of Teziir, she directed him to a business run by another Night Mask: her consort, Catellion. Known as the Platinum Quill, Catellion's firm organizes wagon trains and hires guards for traveling merchants. It also claims to insure cargo headed to Teziir.

Galliad was hooked. He paid her 2 sp, gave his thanks, and sped off to the city's financial square—the Atrium—where Anteashara said the business was located.

When the eager journeyman got there, Catellion agreed to everything he wanted and offered extremely generous rates for his services. In the process, he learned a great deal about Galliad's trade mission. Instead of becoming suspicious of his good fortune, Galliad was delighted and decided to spend some of the money he'd saved at a nearby tavern, the Silent Siren (which Catellion helpfully recommended). After a couple of hours at the bar, Galliad met a local courtesan named Zinni. This meeting was no accident. The Night Masks had hired her to lure Galliad to a garden on the north side of the city after hearing Catellion's report.

The visit proved fatal for both Galliad and Zinni. The garden was the backyard of a manor owned by a wizard named Mantatlus, the leader of the Night Mask team. Within it grew the wizard's favorite pet: a rare, creeping vine called the pillars of Parthenope. The plant has a scent so alluring, few can resist eating its poisonous berries. Both the courtesan and

journeyman succumbed to the berries and died shortly after eating them.

Since looting Galliad and reading the contracts, the villains have established two goals:

1. Mantatlus, under the cover of his *change self* spell, has hired a band of thugs to mug Kathkallan and take his royal jelly.

2. The wizard also hopes to sell the contracts to what locals call a "shuffler," a special breed of fence who deals in forgeries and stolen paperwork.

Adventure Summary

The PCs' mission is to uncover Galliad's fate, recover the contracts, and return them to Kathkallan. To do this, they must find the Night Masks. The best way to find the villains is to retrace Galliad's steps on the day he disappeared.

This is, in fact, what Kathkallan is doing when he is ambushed by thugs in front of the PCs in the opening scene. If the PCs help him and are willing, Kathkallan hires them to search for Galliad. His briefing covers the bulk of the "Adventure Background" and should give them enough clues to get them started.

The adventure's clues are scattered around Athkatla's Trades District. A few encounters are driven by NPCs, rather than location-based. Called "Interludes," they appear in a sidebar at the end of the adventure.

Most of the clues follow a logical progression. However, even if the party ignores evidence or visits locations out of sequence, many of the clues overlap, so there's little risk a missed clue will spoil the adventure.

A brief summary, following the thugs' attack on Kathkallan:

1. Interrogated thugs claim they were hired by a fat, sweaty man. They don't know who he was or where he can be found. Some phrases he uttered suggest he might have been from Westgate, and they met him in a tavern called the Silent Siren (area F).

2. PCs who attempt to retrace Galliad's steps learn he scheduled appointments with both Arrasti and Greater Galleon before his disappearance. Arrasti's scribe overheard a female porter telling the journeyman he could sign up with caravans at "the Platinum something-or-other."

3. The best place to find a caravan is the Atrium, a financial square in the Trades District. There the PCs find the Platinum Quill (area C) and Catellion, its Night Mask owner. However, he claims he never saw Galliad. (He's lying. See "For the Dungeon Master" to learn what happened.) Observant PCs notice that Catellion lives with a female porter, Anteashara.

4. Another merchant in the Atrium, Vemmemalius Gheldieg (area D), contradicts Catellion's story if questioned. Gheldieg is secretly a member of the Shadow Thieves, Amn's own thieves' guild, and he hopes the party will get the Night Masks off his turf. Gheldieg doesn't disclose his true motives, but he tells the party Galliad signed some deals with Catellion, then went to the Silent Siren (area F) for a drink.

5. The bartender at the Silent Siren remembers seeing Galliad leave the tavern with a courtesan from the Path of Silk Flowers, located on the North Side.

6. Another courtesan from the Path of Silk Flowers claims the woman in the bar was her friend, Zinni, who has since disappeared. She adds that one of Zinni's regular customers paid her to lure Galliad to a garden somewhere. She doesn't know the customer's name, but she thinks he's from Westgate. (He was Gil, a Night Mask.)

7. If the party asks other porters, particularly one named Bernal, about Anteashara, they learn she has a hush-hush customer near the Path of Silk Flowers. His address and identity are not common knowledge, but Bernal believes he has an interest in art history.

8. From the information above, the party should be able to find the manor of the Night Mask leader, Mantatlus. It's the only home on the Path of Silk Flowers that matches all the clues above. The stolen contracts are hidden there, in the wizard's art collection.

9. If the PCs have trouble pinpointing the manor, the module includes another clue: A fortune teller employed by Gheldieg comes to the PCs and delivers a riddle-style message as part of a faux fortune. (See "Interlude 1" for details.)

10. Alternatively, the party might learn that stolen contracts are frequently sold to a special breed of fences called "shufflers" and correctly guess the Night Masks plan to sell the documents. Gheldieg can lead the PCs to the right shuffler, a woman named Roseshade, giving them a chance to steal the contracts back from Mantatlus when the wizard shows up to sell them.

Even if investigation fails, the Night Masks might come to the PCs. Two of the interludes (see the sidebar) involve attacks on the party: One is an assassination attempt; the other is a follow-up attempt to steal the royal jelly and kill Kathkallan.

Contract Issues

Agreements in Athkatla are hard to falsify. They're written and notarized three times each on long, single sheets of vellum, then cut jaggedly with a razor into thirds. One third goes with the seller, another third with the buyer, and the middle third goes to a city notary.

To exercise a contract, one party must summon a notary. Notaries authenticate contracts by matching their edges, since the zigzags for each document are unique. Kathkallan's three-piece contract with Arrasti is provided as a handout on the next page.

ATHKATLA

♛ **Athkatla (Metropolis, capital):** Council; AL LE; 100,000-gp limit; Assets 591,520,000 gp; Population 118,304; Mixed (human 90%, 7% halfling, 3% other).

Authority Figures: The Council of Six (the identities of its members are secret).

Important Characters: The Argrimm, Bormul, Coprith, Crytrapper, Ophal, Vymmar, and Zoar merchant houses, and the family leaders who head them. Rhinnom Dannihyr (male human Rog20/Wiz4) is the Grandmaster of the Shadow Thieves and a member of the Council of Six.

Others: Town guards, War2 (×4,000); merchant house guards, Ftr2 (×3,000); Shadow Thieves, Rog6 "Silhouettes" (×90), Rog8 "Cloakmasters" (×9), Rog10 "Shades" (×3).

Notes: Most of the residents aren't very fond of wizards or sorcerers. Blatant arcane spellcasters can expect to be treated rudely or with great suspicion. Clerics, however, are treated normally.

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On this day, 17 Tarsakh, 1371 D.R., the mercantile company registered in the City of Athkatla as Greater Galleon grants Kathkallan of Teziir or his chosen representative an option to buy as many as 200 pounds of Maztican vanilla beans at a price of 100 gold pieces per pound. This contract—purchased at a price of 500 gold pieces—expires in two years from the date entered.

Mossan Zahad Kathkallan of Teziir Pathis ibn Wauki, Notary

On this day, 17 Tarsakh, 1371 D.R., the mercantile company registered in the City of Athkatla as Greater Galleon grants Kathkallan of Teziir or his chosen representative an option to buy as many as 200 pounds of Maztican vanilla beans at a price of 100 gold pieces per pound. This contract—purchased at a price of 500 gold pieces—expires in two years from the date entered.

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Mossan Zahad Kathkallan of Teziir Pathis ibn Wauki, Notary

On this day, 14 Tarsakh, 1371 D.R., Kathkallan of Teziir and Jazasari Arrasti of Athkatla hereby agree to honor the following terms, to be renegotiated after five years: Kathkallan awards Arrasti exclusive rights to buy royal jelly produced by his farms in Teziir; Arrasti agrees to pay consideration of not less than 4,000 gold pieces per half-pound jar of royal jelly.

Jazasar Arrasti Kathkallan of Teziir Pathis ibn Wauki, Notary

On this day, 14 Tarsakh, 1371 D.R., Kathkallan of Teziir and Jazasari Arrasti of Athkatla hereby agree to honor the following terms, to be renegotiated after five years: Kathkallan awards Arrasti exclusive rights to buy royal jelly produced by his farms in Teziir; Arrasti agrees to pay consideration of not less than 4,000 gold pieces per half-pound jar of royal jelly.

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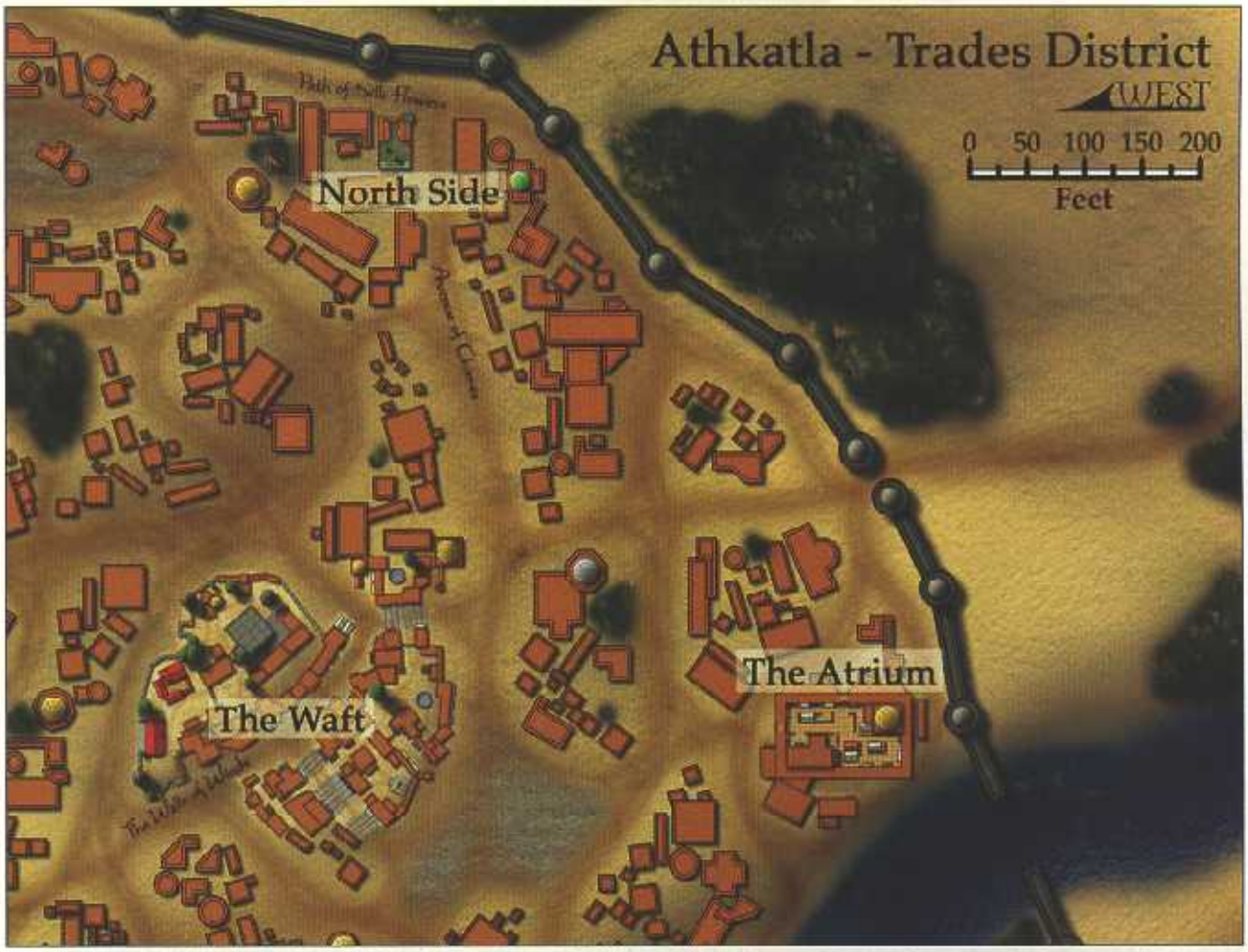
Jazasari Arrasti Kathkallan of Teziir Pathis ibn Wauki, Notary



Beginning the Adventure

At the start of the adventure, the PCs are in the Waft, a sloping, curved street in Athkatla's Trades District devoted to merchants selling spices, perfumes, incense, and other aromatic goods. How the party gets to the Waft is left to you. The PCs might just be passing through, or they might have recently arrived by caravan or ship. An effective technique is to give the party an uneventful mission delivering something to a merchant house on the Waft, but with warnings to look out for ambushes. Many players will be vaguely disappointed when the delivery proves routine, and, itching for excitement, more likely to get involved when the thugs attack Kathkallan.

The ambush takes place on the stairs to the Waft, at the location marked ✕ on The Waft map (see next page). When the action starts, read or paraphrase the following:

> Walking the sloping, curving, cobblestone street known as the Waft is a great way to get away from the stench of horses.
>
> Floral, spicy, and sweet scents roll down the steep grade, savored by strolling merchants and pedestrian shoppers. Shops peddle cinnamon, nutmeg, pepper, vanilla, and sugar, as well as soaps and perfumes. The dueling aromas of baked breads and fine cuisine emerge from bakeries and a tavern.
>
> No horses or livestock are allowed in the Waft. Their odors would ruin the street's allure. To discourage wagons, a merchant house has built two sets of magnificent marble steps where a pair of roads used to lead from the central Trades District. The steps resemble small terraces, each 10 to 15 feet wide and up to 30 feet across.
>
> Near a bakery fronting one of the crowded steps, a man yells, metal flashes, and the clash of blades rings out.
>
> Suddenly, the steps are far less crowded. As the crowd thins, the source of the outburst becomes visible. A red-clothed man wielding a scimitar is holding at bay three ruffians, one of whom is now sucking on his sliced finger while gripping a knife in his off hand. Cowering behind the man in red, a merchant is struggling to draw an ornamental dagger out of its sheath.
>
> Both defenders have their backs to the bakery and an alley that borders it. Thus, they don't notice when three more men with daggers slip from the shadows of the alley and rush toward them.

Creatures (EL 3): The merchant is Kathkallan; the man in red is his bodyguard, Bezzem. The six thugs, sailors from out of town, were paid 20 gp each by Mantatlus (in disguise) to ambush the merchant and swipe his jars of royal jelly. If the PCs don't yell a warning or bother to help the merchant, the adventure ends here. Within 5 rounds, the bodyguard slays two of the thugs, but he and Kathkallan also fall and are looted.

Thugs, Male Human Com1 (6): CR 1/2; Medium-size Humanoid (5 ft. 8 in. tall); HD 1d4+1; hp 5 each; Init +1 (Dex);

The Waft
WEST
0 10 20 30 40 50
Feet
A
B
X
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Spd 30 ft.; AC 11 (+1 Dex); Atk +1 melee (1d4+1/crit 19-20, dagger; or 1d6+1, club); AL NE; SV Fort +1, Ref +1, Will -2; Str 12, Dex 13, Con 13, Int 9, Wis 7, Cha 8.

Skills: Climb +2, Hide +2, Move Silently +2, Profession (sailor) +3. *Feats:* Dodge, Skill Focus (Profession–sailor).

Possessions: Club, four daggers, 5 gp each.

Kathkallan, Male Human Rog2: CR 2; Medium-size Humanoid (5 ft. 6 in. tall); HD 2d6; hp 8; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 11 (+1 Dex); Atk +2 melee (1d4+1/crit 19-20, dagger); SA sneak attack +1d6; SQ evasion; AL NG; SV Fort +0, Ref +4, Will +1; Str 13, Dex 13, Con 10, Int 16, Wis 13, Cha 15.

Skills: Appraise +8, Bluff +7, Decipher Script +8, Diplomacy +7, Knowledge (nature) +5, Knowledge (local) +5, Gather Information +7, Innuendo +6, Listen +8, Pick Pocket +5, Search +8, Sense Motive +7, Spot +8; *Feats:* Alertness, Dodge.

Possessions: Dagger, nine silver rings worth 20 gp each, purse, wagon, shoulder bag containing nine jars of royal jelly, chest containing 200 pp, 43 gp.

Bezzem, Male Human Ftr2: CR 2; Medium-size Humanoid (5 ft. 9 in. tall); HD 2d10; hp 16; Init +3 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 15 (+2 leather armor, +3 Dex); Atk +4 melee (1d6+1/crit 18-20, scimitar); AL LN; SV Fort +3, Ref +3, Will +0; Str 13, Dex 16, Con 11, Int 13, Wis 11, Cha 13.

Skills: Climb +3, Diplomacy +2, Gather Information +2, Intimidate +3, Jump +3, Listen +4, Spot +4. *Feats:* Weapon Focus (scimitar), Dodge, Expertise, Alertness.

Possessions: Leather armor, scimitar, jewelry worth 112 gp, backpack, pouch containing 32 gp.

Tactics: Kathkallan's opponents are neither experienced nor particularly brave. If the PCs yell a warning, Kathkallan whirls around and gets his dagger out quickly enough to forestall an attack from behind. If he doesn't receive a warning, he takes 2 points of damage from a weak blow to the back.

If the PCs don't join in, the bodyguard dispatches one thug every other round, but Kathkallan is critically wounded, falling to 0 hit points in the fourth round. Bezzem falls the subsequent round under the weight of multiple attacks.

The thugs turn to face the PCs if the party gets involved, but flee or surrender if reduced to half their original number.

Development: If the party aids Kathkallan, the merchant immediately offers them employment, promising 200 gp up front if they'll help guard him and his cargo at night, plus 1,000 gp if the PCs find out what happened to Galliad and get his contracts back. If the party haggles, he can go as high as double his original offer.

If the party accepts, Kathkallan briefs them on the situation. He relates everything in the "Adventure Background" section, but none of the information in the section labeled "For the Dungeon Master."

By the end of the encounter, it is about 3 P.M. The party has several hours to investigate before the shops close at 8 P.M. If the party seems directionless, Kathkallan recommends retracing Galliad's steps, adding that he was on his way to Arrasti's pavilion (area A) himself when the thugs attacked.

Any captured thugs answer questions if promised freedom, or if charmed. The muggers, who are sailors from out of town, don't know the name of the man who hired them. They were approached by a porter named Bernal when they got off a ship that morning. Bernal told them they could earn some easy money by talking to a man at the Silent Siren (area F). The man they met at the bar was a sweaty, fat fellow. He gave them 20 gp each and a description of the intended victim, telling the thugs to expect him near Arrasti's pavilion (area A) in the Waft. They were also told to search the merchant's body for five or more jars and take them.

Their employer claimed to be local. But his accent slipped from time to time, and he used strange jargon. For instance, he described the operation as a "pigeon pinch"—a term unique to Westgate. In a pigeon pinch, a courier is ambushed by two teams of attackers, one to distract defenders and the other to grab what he's carrying.

The sweaty man didn't make arrangements to pick up the jars, but assured the muggers a stranger would offer 50 gp each for them before the day ended. (Mantatlus planned to use Anteashara for this exchange.)

If the PCs ask around and make a successful Gather Information check (DC 10), they learn Bernal usually calls it a day early and goes to the Silent Siren (area F).

The Trades District

The adventure is set in the city's Trades District, within which are three areas where key clues and characters are found: The Waft, the Atrium, and the North Side.

The PCs start in the Waft. Clues there will probably lead them to the Atrium, the city's main financial square. The villains stay in the North Side, as do several possible sources of information.

The Waft

The Waft, described partly in the opening scene, slopes at a 20-degree grade from the hills of the city's upper-crust Gem District to the Trades District below. For part of the way, it forms the border between the districts.

On the west side of the Waft is the estate of the prominent Ophal merchant house, which deals in spices. Independent competitors and mercantile companies occupy the east side of the street.

Across from the Ophal compound is the Arrasti estate and pavilion. Farther up the hill is Greater Galleon. PCs retracing Galliad's steps must visit both locations.

A. Jazasari Arrasti's Pavilion. Arrasti (male human Ari2; hp 7; Diplomacy +4, Sense Motive +4) meets customers and suppliers in his pavilion, a billowing tent of burgundy silk in front of his family's estate.

Luxurious rugs cover the floor of Arrasti's sitting room just inside the tent, but they're barely visible under the hundreds of silk pillows spread around the tent, some of which are large enough to support a grown man. A small redwood throne

The Waft Map Key

1. Arrasti Manor
2. Arrasti Perfumes
3. Arrasti Cosmetics
4. Adamantine Mug Tavern
5. Honey Stand
6. Orange Stand
7. Bakery
8. Coffee and Tea
9. The Ophal Estate (salt, pepper, herbs)
10. Incense & Candles
11. Cinnamon
12. Sugar
13. Nutmeg
14. Cocoa
15. Garlic
16. Apothecary
17. Mixed Seasonings
18. Alchemist

adorned with a plump red cushion and silver-threaded pillows overlooks the sea of silk.

Creatures: From a table at the entrance to the pavilion, Arrasti's scribe, Omannar, handles routine transactions, keeps records, and takes down appointments. Behind him is Arrasti's sitting room. The estate's guards are always within earshot.

Omannar the Scribe, Male Human Com1: CR 1/2; Medium-size Humanoid (5 ft. 5 in. tall); HD 1d4-1; hp 3; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 10; Atk -1 melee (1d3-1 subdual, unarmed strike); AL N; SV Fort -1, Ref +0, Will +1; Str 9, Dex 10, Con 9, Int 13, Wis 13, Cha 10.

Skills: Bluff +1, Listen +7, Profession (Scribe) +5, Spot +7, Swim +1. *Feats:* Alertness, Run.

Possessions: Book, quill, ink, pouch with 23 sp.

Arrasti House Guards, Male Humans Ftr2 (10): CR 2; Medium-size Humanoid (6 ft. tall); HD 2d10+2; hp 21 each (includes +3 hp for Toughness); Init +0; Spd 20 ft.; AC 14 (+4 scale mail armor); Atk +5 melee (1d6+4/crit 18-20, scimitar); AL LN; SV Fort +4, Ref +1, Will +0; Str 14, Dex 10, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 11.

Skills: Intimidate +2, Spot +2, Listen +1. *Feats:* Alertness, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (scimitar), Toughness.

Possessions: Scale mail armor, scimitar, pouch with 32 sp.

Treasure: Arrasti uses letters of credit and carries little of monetary value.

Development: Omannar readily acknowledges that Galliad came in to schedule an appointment. He last remembers the journeyman talking just out of sight around the corner of the tent, but within earshot, to a female porter about where to find a caravan broker. He believes she recommended a business called "the Platinum something-or-other."

B. Greater Galleon. Greater Galleon distributes, markets, and sells spices on behalf of several merchant houses.

From the din near Greater Galleon's shop, it sounds as though someone is auctioning off vanilla beans. The counter under the store's awning is nearly obscured by upper-crust citizens clamoring for a merchant's attention. He is holding up a single bean.

Under the awning, near the front of the store, a large kettle hangs over a small brazier. The kettle looks dusty, like it hasn't been used in a while.

Creatures: The head merchant at Greater Galleon is Mossan Zahad.

Mossan Zahad, Male Human Com1: CR 1/2; Medium-size Humanoid (5 ft. 4 in. tall); HD 1d4+2; hp 6; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 10; Atk +0 melee (1d4/crit 19-20, dagger); AL LN; SV Fort +2, Ref +0, Will +4; Str 10, Dex 10, Con 14, Int 13, Wis 14, Cha 10.

Skills: Bluff +2, Diplomacy +4, Listen +6, Spot +6; *Feats:* Iron Will, Skill Focus (Diplomacy).

Possessions: Pouch with 103 gp.

Tactics: The storefront deals primarily in vanilla, but its supplies are running low because several expected shipments of vanilla are now at the bottom of the sea or in the hands of pirates. In response to the shortage, vanilla prices have increased considerably. The beans Kathkallan can buy for 20,000 gp (if he recovers his contract) are actually worth about 50,000 gp.

The kettle was once used to boil cream and vanilla beans because the alluring smell drew customers. That tactic is no longer used: Vanilla has become too expensive to waste.

Development: Zahad is reluctant to sell vanilla for the price on Kathkallan's contract and refuses to unless presented with the paperwork. If he hears the contracts have disappeared, he's quietly delighted.

He also flatly refuses to help with the investigation. "It really isn't my problem, is it?" he says, with the hint of a contemptuous smile. "Now, if you don't mind, I'm busy."

All he knows is that Galliad scheduled an appointment there, then left, heading downhill. His smug smile and abrupt manner might give PCs the impression he knows more than he lets on—that, in fact, he might be involved. If attacked, Zahad runs away and screams for help. If *charmed*, he tells the party what little he knows and apologizes for being rude.

The Atrium

The Atrium is the bustling financial square of Athkatla, through which most trade-related paperwork flows. The city notary maintains a small office here, as do most of the city's moneychangers and banking operations.

Anyone retracing Galliad's steps is likely to come to the Atrium, since one of his errands was to find a caravan, and any local porter tells the party that most caravan coordination is done here. Galliad's path leads to the Platinum Quill

(area C), and valuable clues are available at a nearby merchant stall (area D).

Adjacent to the financial square is a small tavern called the Silent Siren (area F), where the party and Kathkallan are staying. The tavern is also the last place Galliad was seen alive.

C. Platinum Quill. If the PCs have interviewed Omannar (area A) and are looking for the word "platinum" on signs in the Atrium, they find only one match: the Platinum Quill. Indeed, the company specializes in coordinating and forming caravans, hiring security for traveling merchants, and providing insurance—precisely the kind of place Galliad would have gone.

The proprietor of the Platinum Quill, Catellion, denies ever seeing the journeyman, noting that the previous day was "actually sort of slow." Catellion is lying; as one of the Night Masks, he uses his business as a cover for his operations and was instrumental in Galliad's disappearance. PCs who make a Sense Motive check against his Bluff skill realize he's hiding something. (See "The Night Masks" sidebar for a full description of Catellion and Anteashara, and "For the Dungeon Master" for a description of what transpired.)

Catellion conducts most of his business from a counter under the shop's awning. He and Anteashara, another Night Mask, live together in the back of the shop, which is separated from the storefront by a curtain.

If the PCs call Catellion's bluff (by making the successful Sense Motive check), he calls for Anteashara, who joins him from wherever she's currently loitering in the Atrium. The following round they make a break for it, leaving the Atrium through the north exit, circling around to the east to throw off any pursuit, and heading to Matatlus's manor. Perceptive PCs can prevent Mantatlus from becoming aware of their investigation by instigating a confrontation with Catellion before he has a chance to alert his boss.

If the PCs fail to catch Catellion in his lie and head off to pursue their investigation elsewhere, the Night Mask immediately writes a short message to Mantatlus and hires a runner to deliver it to the manor house in the North Side. If the PCs return to Catellion once they've visited areas D, E, and F and confront him with his lie, he calls Anteashara to his side and the two try to escape (as described above).

Creatures (EL 3): Catellion employs two thugs who stand just outside an alley directly east of the Atrium, mingling with the light crowds meandering through the district. As Catellion runs out of the Atrium, he signals the two guards, who move 30 feet down the alley and prepare to ambush Catellion's pursuers. Catellion and Anteashara then sprint down the alley past the guards before turning to make a stand.

Catellian and Anteashara: See "The Night Masks" sidebar for statistics and equipment.

Thugs, Male Human Warı (2): CR 1/2; Medium-size Humanoid (6 ft. tall); HD 1d10+1; hp 6 each; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 13 (+1 Dex, +2 leather armor); Atk +3 melee (1d6+1, club); or +2 melee (1d4+1; crit 19-20, dagger) AL NE; SV Fort +1, Ref +1, Will -2; Str 12, Dex 13, Con 13, Int 9, Wis 7, Cha 8.

Skills: Climb +3, Hide +2, Jump +3, Move Silently +2; *Feats:* Dodge, Weapon Focus (club).

Possessions: Leather armor, club, two daggers, 5 gp each.

Tactics: The thugs fight until slain, as Catellion has promised them (falsely) that they will be *raised* if they die serving him. If both guards fall, Catellion and Anteashara attempt to flee, heading to Mantatlus's estate in a roundabout manner.

Development: Although Galliad filled out some paperwork during his transaction with Catellion, the Night Mask burned all the papers later that night after the journeyman was slain.

Catellion and Anteashara do not willingly betray the Night Masks. If *charmed*, they admit to their role in Galliad's disappearance and explain what happened to him. They won't divulge where Mantatlus lives—the spell isn't powerful enough to make them betray their partner. They might offer to deliver a message to him; a stealthy party could follow them to his lair.

If the PCs spy on the couple, they learn Catellion rarely goes far from the shop, while Anteashara runs errands for clients all over the city. During some of these errands, however, she stops at Mantatlus's manor or meets with the wizard or his henchmen in public, using her profession and the wizard's *change self* spells to throw off potential observers.

The only interesting things in the room are a small chest containing 56 gp and a pair of "domino masks" (black-cloth masks covering the eyes and nose, but with two eyeholes cut out). A successful Knowledge (local) check (DC 15) reveals the masks as calling cards of the Night Masks thieves' guild.

IMPERSONATING A BUYER

The PCs might want to impersonate potential buyers interested in meeting with Mantatlus. This strategy poses some challenges, however:

• Mantatlus doesn't meet with anyone unless referred to them by someone he finds credible. Catellion referred him to Roseshade, for instance. If the PCs pay her 50 gp, Roseshade (area E) agrees to refer the wizard to them and arrange the meeting. The wizard cautiously follows the shuffler's advice out of misplaced faith in Catellion's judgment.

• There's a good chance the Night Masks are aware of the PCs, particularly if they weren't subtle when dealing with the thugs in the opening sequence or Catellian and Anteashara in the Atrium. Any PC pretending to be a merchant, therefore, must roll Bluff and Disguise checks against the wizard's Sense Motive and Spot skills respectively.

D. Gheldieg's Booth. The party might ask other merchants in the Atrium whether they saw Galliad before he disappeared. At least one merchant, a moneychanger named Vemmemalius Gheldieg, says he saw Galliad.

Even if the PCs fail to question neighboring merchants, Gheldieg approaches them, pitching his services. His true purpose isn't sales, however. He hopes they'll ask him about Galliad or Catellion, but he doesn't want them to realize it was his idea.

Creature: Gheldieg is a Silhouette, or high-ranking officer in the Shadow Thieves. He runs the guild's counterintelligence operations in Athkatla's Trades District, and he knows the Night Masks are treading on his turf. The Shadow Thief hasn't taken any direct action against the Night Masks, because he'd rather study how they operate while they think they're activities are going undetected; that way, he can outmaneuver them later. However, he doesn't mind giving the PCs a few hints. He'd like to see how the Night Masks react to opposition, provided they don't know the Shadow Thieves are involved.

Vemmemalius Gheldieg, Male Human Rog6: CR 6; Medium-size Humanoid (5 ft. 10 in. tall); HD 6d6; hp 23; Init +3 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 15 (+3 Dex, *+2 ring of protection*); Atk +5 melee (1d6+1/crit 19-20, short sword); +7 ranged (1d4+1/crit 19-20, thrown daggers); SA sneak attack +3d6; SQ evasion, uncanny dodge; AL LE; SV Fort +2, Ref +8, Will +3; Str 12, Dex 17, Con 10, Int 15, Wis 12, Cha 16.

Skills: Balance +11, Climb +9, Disable Device +10, Hide +12, Jump +8, Listen +9, Move Silently +12, Open Locks +12, Pick Pockets +11, Search +11, Spot +9, Tumble +12; *Feats:* Alertness, Dodge, Expertise, Mobility.

Possessions: +2 ring of protection, short sword, three throwing daggers, pouch containing 76 gp.

Development: Gheldieg gives the following information only if the party asks appropriate questions. (He doesn't want to appear too eager, just cooperative).

• Catellion did meet Galliad, despite his assertions to the contrary. They filled out a fair amount of paperwork, in fact, and seemed to strike some sort of deal.

• At the end of their dealing, the journeyman asked a question Gheldieg couldn't hear and Catellion pointed toward the Atrium's west exit. Galliad walked that way and entered the Silent Siren tavern.

• Catellion lives with a female porter named Anteashara.

If briefed on the party's mission, Gheldieg readily observes that stolen documents in Athkatla are often sold to "shufflers"—dealers in illicit paperwork. He informs the party that the city's most prominent shuffler is a woman named Roseshade, just a few tables away (area **E**).

E. Roseshade's Table. Mantatlus plans to sell the stolen contracts to a dealer in stolen or forged documents, also called a shuffler, named Roseshade. The PCs can learn about the meeting merely by guessing he might try to pawn the contracts and asking around. Gheldieg (area **D**) even recommends they talk to Roseshade if prompted.

Creature: Roseshade is a Shadow Thieves contact. Her orders are to aid the PCs' investigation as much as she can without arousing their suspicion.

Roseshade, Female Human Com1: CR 1/2; Medium-size Humanoid (5 ft. 9 in. tall); HD 1d4; hp 4; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 10; Atk +0 melee (1d4/crit 19-20, dagger); AL N; SV Fort +0, Ref +0, Will +2; Str 10, Dex 10, Con 10, Int 14, Wis 14, Cha 14.

Skills: Bluff +4, Forgery +4, Knowledge (Amnian documents) +4, Listen, +6, Spot +6; *Feats:* Alertness, Skill Focus (Forgery).

Possessions: Purse with 53 gp.

Development: Roseshade readily confirms an unidentified "red-haired northerner" (Mantatlus using *change self*) offered to sell her a vanilla option and royal jelly contract. Because she wanted to find a buyer before committing to the sale, she told him to come back at noon on Day Three of the adventure.

She willingly gives the PCs the date and time of the exchange, since the Shadow Thieves have made it clear she's to answer the party's questions. Even if the party doesn't interrupt the exchange, Roseshade ultimately refuses to buy the contracts from Mantatlus—another order from the Shadow Thieves.

F. The Silent Siren. The Silent Siren, a coral-decorated bar at the Atrium, allows overnight guests to use it as a common room for 5 sp per person. Kathkallan has the party stay here with him—to protect him—unless the PCs offer to provide better accommodations elsewhere.

Even if the PCs don't stay at the tavern, they can question the bartender and one of the patrons, a porter. The bartender confirms Galliad was at the bar before he disappeared and offers another clue. Bernal, who helped recruit the thugs in the opening scene, has some insights about Anteashara, one of the Night Masks.

F1. Main Room.

The Silent Siren, a single-story tavern near the city's main financial square, buzzes with the shady dealings of conspirators and merchants, who sip at mediocre drinks while discussing business. Most of the tables only seat two guests.

In several corners of the room, pillars of pink coral have been carved to resemble mermaids with outstretched arms. And coral walls bearing carvings of undersea landscapes hide tables from prying eyes. The bar, which runs along the east side of the room, resembles the prow of a large ship.

The tavern accommodates 1d6 overnight guests, plus the party, Kathkallan, and Bezzem.

The coral mermaids look so much like they should be golems that most wizards aren't comfortable around them until they've used *detect magic* to verify that they aren't magical.

Creatures: Able Yaleen, the owner (male human Com; hp 3; Profession—barkeep +4), tends the bar during market hours. Bernal the Porter (male human Com; hp 2; Profession—porter +2; Alertness) is here from about 3 P.M. on.

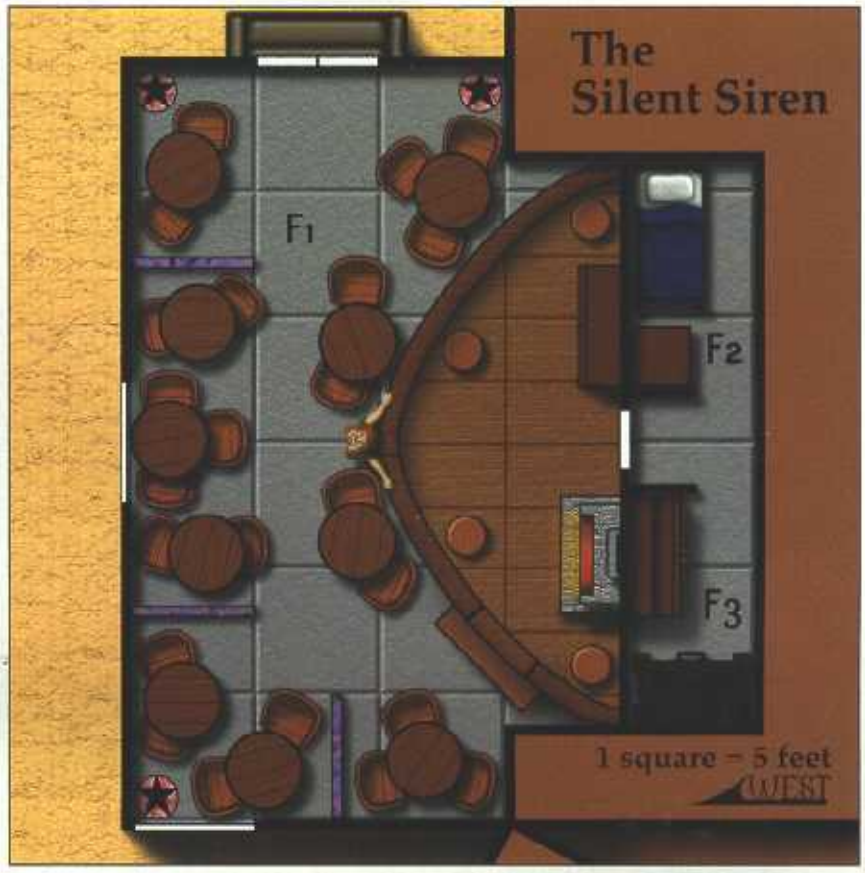
Development: Yaleen, if questioned, confirms that Galliad came into the bar the night he disappeared. The journeyman enjoyed drinks with a black-haired woman wearing an orchid brooch and eventually left with her. Yaleen didn't recognize her, but most women who wear an orchid brooch are courtesans who live on the Path of Silk Flowers, located on the North Side.

The bartender also remembers the fat merchant described by the thugs. He doesn't know the man's name, but Yaleen says he's been to the tavern a few times. He remembers that the man left the tavern several times but returned each time roughly an hour later. (Mantatlus, disguised as the fat man, had to leave periodically to renew his *change self* spell.)

Bernal drinks heavily, but he is easy to intimidate. However, he recalls only that a fat man paid him to recruit sailors and send them to the tavern for interviews.

If asked about Anteashara and paid 10 gp, Bernal waxes eloquent about the rival porter. He knows she lives at the Platinum Quill, and that she has a secretive client in the North Side near the Path of Silk Flowers. He doesn't know which house the client lives in but says Anteashara is always digging up information on sculptures and other art objects for him.

Other porters in the Trades District are 30% likely to relay the same information.



F2. Owner's Quarters. Yaleen stays here. He has few furnishings other than a cot and nightstand, since he compulsively invests his earnings in speculative, unprofitable ventures.

F3. Kitchen and Storage Area. Shelves hold wines, fruits, cheeses, and breads delivered from local bakeries. The room has a small stove.

The North Side

The North Side is inhabited largely by people with plenty of money but little status among the city elite. The area hugs the north wall of the city. It has two key, well-known features: the Path of Silk Flowers and the Avenue of Chimes.

Path of Silk Flowers

As you turn onto the street, the first thing you notice is the profusion of bright color. Gardens fill the small yards in front of every small home and building, producing a riot of blues, reds, violets, and every other shade under the rainbow. Looking closer, you notice that the gardens seem to be deliberately constructed to better attract your eye, and the flowers are strangely perfect. It's only after you stop to inspect them that you realize the blooms are all made of silk.

Most of the city's high-class courtesans live in apartments on the Path of Silk Flowers, a brick walkway winding along the north wall of the Trades District. The PCs might visit the street after hearing Galliad was seen with a woman who appeared to be a courtesan (see area F).

The courtesans of the street share a hobby that gives the path its name: Each maintains a bed of artificial silk flowers, competing to see who can build the most attractive garden. Faux gardens are spaced along the brick walkway, where they can be admired by passing pedestrians.

Creatures: At any time, up to six courtesans wander the path, but there's only a 15% chance that Nashafeen (below) is among them. If the PCs offer a bribe of 10 gp or more and say they're looking for men from Westgate, the other courtesans recommend talking to Zinni but note, sadly, that she's been missing for a couple of days. If the PCs insist on finding someone who knows her, they fetch Nashafeen.

Nashafeen, Female Human Com: Medium-size Humanoid (5 ft. 6 in. tall); HD 1d4; hp 4; Init +0; Spd 30 ft; AC 10; Atk +0 melee (1d4/crit 19-20, dagger); AL N; SV Fort +0, Ref +0, Will +1; Str 10, Dex 11, Con 11, Int 9, Wis 13, Cha 15.

Skills: Listen +7, Spot +7. *Feats:* Alertness, Run.

Possessions: Dagger, orchid brooch worth 15 gp, gold earring worth 85 gp, purse containing 12 gp.

THE NIGHT MASKS

The Night Masks is a notorious thieves' guild based in the city of Westgate on the south coast of Dragonmere. In this adventure, the PCs run afoul of a group of Night Masks led by a wizard named Mantatlus, who has an estate on the Path of Silk Flowers in the North Side of the Trades District.

Mantatlus's most important henchman is Catellion, as he is both the wizard's eyes and ears in the streets. Catellion is aided by an Athkatlan native named Anteashara who knows the city better than any of them. Mantatlus also retains two loyal bodyguards named Gil and Holm, both of whom live at the wizard's mansion.

Anteashara, Female Human Rog1: Medium-size Humanoid (5 ft. 7 in. tall); HD 1d6+1; hp 7; Init +3 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 14 (+3 Dex, +1 padded); Atk +0 melee (1d4/crit 19-20, dagger); SA sneak attack +1d6; AL NE; SV Fort +1, Ref +5, Will +1; Str 11, Dex 16, Con 13, Int 13, Wis 12, Cha 15.

Skills: Balance +5, Climb +3, Hide +7, Jump +1, Listen +7, Move Silently +7, Open Locks +7, Pick Pockets +7, Profession (Porter) +3, Search +5, Spot +7, Tumble +7. *Feats:* Dodge, Alertness.

Possessions: Padded armor, dagger, pouch with 31 gp.

Raven-haired Anteashara uses her porter job as a cover for her spying and to relay missives between Catellion and Mantatlus. Because she's aggressive and accomplished, innkeepers vouch for her. She lives with Catellion in area C, the Platinum Quill.

Catellion, Male Human Rog3: Medium-size Humanoid (5 ft. 8 in. tall); HD 3d6; hp 12; Init +4 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 14 (+4 Dex); Atk +3 melee (1d6+1/crit 19-20, short sword); or +6 ranged (1d4+1/crit 19-20, dagger). SA sneak attack +2d6; SQ evasion, uncanny dodge; AL LE; SV Fort +1, Ref +7, Will +2; Str 12, Dex 18, Con 10, Int 14, Wis 12, Cha 14.

Skills: Appraise +5, Bluff +8, Climb +5, Disguise +8, Gather Information +8, Hide +10, Jump +3, Listen +7, Move Silently +10, Open Locks +8, Pick Pockets +8, Search +8, Spot +6, Use Rope +6. *Feats:* Dodge, Expertise, Mobility.

Possessions: Potion of invisibility, short sword, three daggers, pouch with 94 gp.

Catellion runs a business called the Platinum Quill (area C), coordinating caravans and guards for traveling merchants. From his position, he collects information on trade deals and dispenses it to Mantatlus. A swarthy, natural salesman, Catellion lives in the back of his shop with Anteashara.

Gil, Male Human Rog1: Medium-size Humanoid (5 ft. 6 in. tall); HD 1d6; hp 6; Init +3 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 15 (+3 Dex, +2 leather armor); Atk +1 melee (1d6+1/crit 19-20, short sword and poison); or +3 ranged (1d8/crit 19-20, light crossbow); SA sneak attack +1d6; AL NE; SV Fort +0, Ref +5, Will -1; Str 12, Dex 16, Con 11, Int 13, Wis 8, Cha 10.

Skills: Balance +5, Climb +4, Disable Device +7, Hide +7, Jump +5, Listen +3, Move Silently +7, Pick Pockets +7, Search +4, Spot +3, Tumble +7. *Feats:* Dodge, Mobility.

Possessions: Leather armor, short sword, two daggers, light crossbow with 20 bolts, jar of blue whinnis poison (10 applications)*, vial of cologne, pouch containing 11 gp, 14 sp. *See the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, page 80.

A short, wiry man with carefully braided black hair and goatee, Gil douses himself liberally with cologne several times a day. In combat, he is inclined toward reckless and cinematic stunts. He lives in Mantatlus's manor (area G).

Holm, Male Human Rog1: Medium-size Humanoid (6 ft. tall); HD 1d6+4 (includes +3 for Toughness feat); hp 10; Init +3 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 15 (+3 Dex, +2 leather armor); Atk +2 melee (1d6+2/crit 19-20, short sword and poison); or +3 ranged (1d8/crit 19-20, light crossbow); SA sneak attack +1d6; AL LE; SV Fort +1, Ref +5, Will -1; Str 14, Dex 16, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 9, Cha 8.

Skills: Balance +5, Climb +5, Hide +7, Jump +4, Listen +2, Move Silently +7, Open Locks +6, Pick Pockets +7, Search +4, Spot +2, Tumble +7. *Feats:* Dodge, Toughness.

Possessions: Leather armor, short sword, light crossbow with 20 bolts, jar of blue whinnis poison (8 applications)*, thieves' tools, pouch containing 31 gp, 9 sp. *See the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, page 80.

Holm is taller and more muscular than his partner, Gil. He has let his hair grow long to cover ritual scarring on his scalp, but several ridges of scars remain visible on his cheeks and forehead. He lives at Mantatlus's manor (area G).

Mantatlus, Male Human Wiz4: Medium-size Humanoid (5 ft. 6 in. tall); HD 4d4+4; hp 17; Init +3 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 14 (+2 Dex, *+2 bracers of armor*); Atk +2 melee (1d4/crit 19-20, dagger); or +5 ranged (1d8/crit 19-20, light crossbow); SA spells; SQ spells; AL LE; SV Fort +2, Ref +4, Will +4; Str 10, Dex 16, Con 12, Int 18, Wis 10, Cha 12.

Skills: Bluff +3, Concentration +8, Disguise +3, Gather Information +3, Knowledge (history) +9, Knowledge (nature) +9, Listen +4, Profession (apothecary) +2, Profession (herbalist) +3, Spellcraft +11, Spot +4. *Feats:* Alertness, Combat Casting, Dodge, Scribe Scroll.

Spells Prepared (4/4/3; base DC 14 + spell level): 0—*daze, detect magic, mage hand, resistance;* 1st—*change self, spider climb, summon monster I, unseen servant;* 2nd—*darkness, invisibility, locate object.*

Possessions: Potion of cure light wounds; scroll of *change self, invisibility,* and *summon monster I; +2 bracers of armor;* dagger; room key; chest key; chest containing 324 gp, 150 sp. Since the adventure might span several days, Mantatlus might prepare spells other than those listed above.

His spellbook includes those spells listed above, as well as the following:

Spellbook: 0—all cantrips; 1st—*alarm, charm person, comprehend languages, magic missile;* 2nd—*cat's grace, resist elements.*

Mantatlus is of average build and height with dark hair, but he seldom appears in public without a *change self* spell. Two characteristics might give him away: A glandular condition causes him to sweat easily, regardless of any disguise or spell effect. Also, he has an *arcane mark* tattoo of the symbol of Mask, god of thieves, on his chest. A *detect magic* spell reveals the glow of the tattoo through his shirt.

Mantatlus, a guerrilla-style opponent, prefers to strike and slink away without getting mired in combat. His favorite tactic is to send in henchmen or summoned monsters to keep enemies busy, while he uses spells like *spider climb, change self,* or *invisibility* to take advantage of the situation and use his crossbow to pick off unengaged opponents—especially other spellcasters.

Development: Nashafeen talks if one of the PCs makes a successful Diplomacy or Intimidate check (DC 15) and slips her 10 gp. She'll also talk for 30 gp if the check fails. She has the following information to relate:

- A foreigner named Gil has visited Zinni several times since arriving in town a month ago.
- The other day, Zinni said Gil had hired her to meet a friend of his at a local tavern and lure him to a nearby private garden "for a surprise." She hasn't been seen since.
- Nashafeen doesn't know anything about the garden of poisonous berries or Gil's whereabouts (or residence).
- Although Gil denied it, Nashafeen thinks he was from Westgate, based on his accent and cologne.

If the PCs ask, Nashafeen shows them Zinni's apartment. It's rather small and there's nothing of interest there.

Avenue of Chimes

The Avenue ties into an important clue elsewhere in the module (see "Interlude 1"), so it's important that at least one PC be aware of it. Ultimately, the Avenue is important because Mantatlus's manor, located at its intersection with the Path of Silk Flowers, takes advantage of its unique properties. Read or paraphrase the following as the PCs pass by:

> Few pedestrians walk the Avenue of Chimes, probably because the shadowy, broad alley is unnerving. Spaced along the street as regularly as lanterns, and hanging at nearly every gate and doorway, are elaborate wind chimes.
>
> The chimes don't ring for wind, however. Indeed, this is one reason they are disturbing. Whenever pedestrians stroll up or down the street, the chimes gently mark their passage, issuing a rippling chorus of sound that keeps pace perfectly with the passing individual.
>
> It seems impossible to walk the street without everyone following your passage.

The phenomenon is the result of a permanent magical effect placed on the street by one of the few prominent wizards in Athkatla. His identity is unimportant to this adventure.

The Night Mask wizard lives here, and all of the locals in the part of town are aware that a spellcaster occupies a residence on the avenue, if not of his affiliations. Mantatlus figures his own operations will go unnoticed in the shadow of a greater and more ostentatious mage who enspelled the chimes, and he uses the chimes as an inanimate watchdog for the gate to his garden (area G6). The scents of his garden (see below) drift into the street but have no dire effects at this range.

G. Mantatlus' Manor. The party should eventually come to the wizard's manor, assuming they piece together enough of the available clues. There are only two other manors on the Path of Silk Flowers with gardens, and the exterior of Mantatlus's home has some telltale signs that someone knowledgeable in art history lives there.

> The owner of this home obviously has two loves: exotic plants and human-oriented art history. Both are evident in the design and decoration of this manor. The oaken, double front doors are carved to resemble fractured sandstone tablets covered in pictoglyphs. Historic stained-glass windows depicting ancient orators are set into the second floor of a small tower at the northeast corner of the manor.

Even from the street, you can smell the intoxicating scent of various herbs and flowers that seems to emanate from a walled garden at the rear of the manor.

If Mantatlus is home when the PCs arrive (your discretion), he is probably in the manor's study (area G2). Gil and Holm usually play cards in the kitchen (area G8).

If the PCs use the Avenue of Chimes or enter noisily through the front door or one of the manor's barred windows, the Night Masks react quickly. Gil and Holm station themselves at the doors to the garden (area G1) so they can guard the manor if someone enters that way, or ambush intruders if they come through the front door. Fighting from the doorway gives them an escape route regardless of the party's approach.

Mantatlus casts *invisibility* and heads to the exhibit (area G3) to survey the situation. If he feels outclassed, he takes the contracts from their hiding places in his exhibit and tries to sneak away. Otherwise, he casts *summon monster I* and enters the fray.

The front doors, which open into the main foyer (area G1), are locked (Open Locks, DC 15). The doors leading to the foyer from the garden are not locked.

G1. Main Hallway.

This foyer has vaulted archways opening to rooms to the east and west. To the east is a study with a square corner turret. To the west you see a door just opposite the archway.

Across from the front doors stands another set of doors. Small windows set in these portals reveal a fountain and lush garden on the other side.

A red rug in the middle of the room features an image of a burning forest.

The double doors to the garden (area G7) are not locked.

G2. Study.

This study features a comfortable couch, a wooden desk covered with scattered papers in the southeast corner, and a bookshelf against the west wall. In the northeast corner of the room, behind the couch, a staircase leads up to a high shelf in the manor's turret, displayed in which are several curiosities.

Mantatlus uses this room as his study. The bookshelf holds tomes on ancient history and herbalism. PCs studying the latter tomes and making a successful Search check (DC 20) find a passage in one book that describes and illustrates the pillars of Parthenope, which can be found in the garden (area G7). The desk holds paper, vellum, quills, and ink, but nothing else of interest. The door to the south is locked and leads to area G4.

The staircase climbs to a ledge in the manor's turret where Mantatlus exhibits several oddities (area G3).

Locked Wooden Door: 2 in. thick; Hardness 5; hp 20; Break (DC 25); Open Lock (DC 25).

G3. Exhibit.

The narrow platform that forms the second level of the turret features a tiny museum of human art history. The room holds nine pedestals, each displaying a different object. Small frames attached to the front of each pedestal hold vellum labels describing the exhibits.

Treasure: The pedestals hold the following items (the values given assume the PCs find an interested buyer):

1. A bronze-plated statuette of an efreet. It is about five hundred years old and weighs 250 pounds. The statuette is worth 300 gp.

2. A marble statuette of an ancient general, which is about nine hundred years old. It weighs more than 200 pounds and is worth 150 gp.

3. A bronze dagger—supposedly the weapon used in the assassination of the aforementioned general. The real dagger would be worth 100 gp, but this version is actually a fake. (Mantatlus was fooled by the man who sold it to him.)

4. An illuminated religious text, one thousand years old, that is worth roughly 700 gp to a collector. Mantatlus has hidden the royal jelly contract on the other side of the pedestal's label, inside the frame, requiring a Search check (DC 15) to find.

5. A seven-hundred-year-old decorated bronze scroll case. It holds nothing, but is worth 75 gp.

6. A three-thousand-year-old clay water jug from a long-dead culture. Partly chipped, it's worth 30 gp to a collector.

7. A 150-year-old painting of an Athkatlan street scene. By a respected local painter, it's worth 200 gp. The vanilla contract is in plain sight, having been tucked in front of the pedestal's label, but because the labels are all vellum and the jagged edges of the contract are hidden by the frame, only PCs reading the labels and making a successful Spot or Search check (DC 10) notice it.

8. An ornately gilded plate that was commissioned two hundred years ago by a notorious local prince. It's worth 300 gp.

9. A chalice to match the plate above, with a similar price tag of 300 gp.

Traps (EL 1 each): The pedestals under the gilded plate and chalice have been rigged with a version of the *shocking grasp* spell (cast from scrolls that Mantatlus acquired in Westgate). Anyone attempting to lift an object without first turning the pedestal 90 degrees triggers the trap. The jolt ruins the object—a side effect Mantatlus, who's unfamiliar with electricity, hadn't contemplated.

***Shocking Grasp* Traps (2):** CR 1; discharge affects person touching the object or pedestal (1d8+4 points of electricity damage); Reflex save (DC 12) for half damage; Search (DC 21); Disable Device (DC 21).

THE ART OF INTERVIEWING

Many clues in the adventure rely on interviews with witnesses. Keep in mind that this information shouldn't just be handed out to the first PC who talks to a source.

Although PCs can use skills like Intimidate and Diplomacy to convince a source to talk, that doesn't mean the subject knows which facts are helpful. Many witnesses don't elaborate on details, and sometimes they focus on irrelevant facts. This forces an interviewer to pick up on small details and home in on them. If the PCs don't pick up on such clues on their own, allow them to weed out the important details with successful Gather Information checks (DC 10).

For instance, assume a captured thug tells the party he doesn't know the guy who hired him. The interview might go something like this:

PC: "Did he give you a name? What did he look like?"

Thug: "No name. Just a big, fat, sweaty guy. Said he was a local."

[At this point, the PC makes a successful Innuendo check (DC 10) to spot the thug's careful word choice.]

PC: "'Said' he was? You think he's from somewhere else?"

Thug: "Oh, I don't know. The other guys from my ship said something about his accent not being right, like it was faked. And he said some things they thought were funny."

PC: "Like what?"

Thug: "When I asked what the job was, he told me it was a 'pigeon pinch.' I didn't know what that meant."

PC: "What's it mean?"

Thug: "Muggin' a courier. He had to explain it to me."

PC: "And the other guys you were working with thought that was weird?"

Thug: "Yeah. One of the guys—you killed him in that fight—said he's only heard people use that expression in a few places."

PC: "Like?"

Thug: "On the Dragon Coast, Westgate, I think."

G4. Mantatlus's Bedroom.

Behind the door from the study, you find a well-appointed bedroom, complete with a double bed, rug, desk, commode, and a chest. To the west is a large window, through which you can see the fountain in the garden.

Treasure: The chest, which is locked (Break DC 25; Open Lock DC 30), contains the wizard's spellbook and 220 gp.

G5. Bath. This room contains a marble tub that fills with water from a hot spring under the property. There is nothing else of interest in this room.

G6. Gate.

The oaken gate to the garden features a relief carving of a treant's face. Basalt posts on either side of the gate resemble tree trunks.

Anyone approaching the gate or wall sets off ringing along the Avenue of Chimes, alerting the wizard and his guards that someone is near his property.

Locked Wooden Gate: 2 in. thick; Hardness 5; hp 20; Break (DC 25); Open Lock (DC 15).

G7. Garden.

A trail of stepping stones wanders among flowers and two lemon trees, each entwined with pale green vines bearing white flowers and golden berries. A breeze carries the scent of the berries: sweet, like grapes, and tempting.

A fountain to the north features a statue of an orator. To the east, just north of the gate, rests a small building.

The garden contains two hazards in the form of Mantatlus's favorite pets, the pillars of Parthenope. These are rare, poisonous climbing vines that thrive on the nutrients of decaying

bodies. Mantatlus has tended the vines long enough that he's immune to their scent, if not their toxic berries. Gil and Holm avoid the garden.

Two towers on the south corners of the yard act as sheds for gardening tools. The fountain is unremarkable, and the small building is the manor's bath (area G5).

Trap (EL 4): The pillars of Parthenope, which usually climb trees or columns, have wrapped around the two lemon trees. Anyone who comes within 5 feet of the trees must succeed at a Will saving throw (DC 12) or be compelled to eat a berry. Those who eat must then make a Fortitude saving throw (DC 12). Success indicates the individual feels ill and is no longer tempted by the scent. Those who fail the Fortitude save take 1 point of initial Constitution damage. Another save 1 minute later is required to avoid the identical secondary damage.

One round after the first failed Will save, the victim must then make another Will save (DC 13) or eat another berry. This requires another Fortitude save (DC 13); failure indicates the victim has taken another point of initial Constitution damage. This continues each round until the victim dies or is forced away from the plants. The Will and Fortitude saves become increasingly difficult with each berry consumed; increase the DC by 1 per berry eaten after the first. If victims are dragged away before killing themselves, they recover their Constitution at the normal rate.

Pillars of Parthenope: CR 4; poison berry (1 point of initial and secondary Con damage); Will save (DC 12) to avoid compulsion to eat; Fortitude save (DC 12) negates. *Note:* The DC to avoid eating and taking damage from the berries increases by 1 every round on a failed save.

G8. Kitchen. This room is a combination kitchen and dining room. It holds a stove, dining table, two counters for food preparation, and a cabinet.

The kitchen holds no surprises. The counters are currently bare, and the cabinets hold an assortment of foods.

G9. Storage Room.

This room doubles as a storage space and pantry. On the shelves to the left lie a number of household and gardening tools, a bucket, and a large bag of rich, black soil. Several shelves on the right hold a small sack of dried meat, several loaves of bread, and a half-eaten wheel of cheese.

There is little of interest or value here.

G10. Gil and Holm's Room.

Behind the door, which has no lock, you see a bunk bed and night stand. The furnishings here are plain, yet serviceable, and the room looks clean, if lived in.

Treasure: The bottom of one bed post has been hollowed out and contains a pouch with three aquamarines (worth 50 gp each). A Search check (DC 15) reveals the hiding place.

Concluding the Adventure

If the PCs bring Kathkallan the contracts, they earn a long-term patron in the city of Teziir. The city has historically avoided employing mercenaries, but is reconsidering due to raiding by pirates and thieves. A known, trustworthy party with Kathkallan's recommendation can find rewarding patrons in Teziir.

If the PCs sell the contracts for their own gain, however, Kathkallan places a 2,000 gp bounty on them.

Future adventuring possibilities are many. Kathkallan might need protection while he completes the deals and travels back

INTERLUDES

These encounters happen at specific times over the course of the adventure. Feel free to alter the timeline of these events to suit your own campaign and style of play.

Interlude 1: The Fortune Teller

Creature (EL 4): During the first night of the adventure, the Shadow Thieves send the party a clue in the form of a fortune teller calling herself Madame Lamia, who offers to tell them their fortunes for a nominal fee (5 gp).

Madame Lamia, Female Human Rog4: Medium-size Humanoid (5 ft. 3 in. tall); HD 4d6; hp 18; Init +7 (Dex, Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft.; AC 13 (+3 Dex); Atk +3 melee (1d4/crit 19-20, dagger); SA sneak attack +2d6; SQ evasion, uncanny dodge; AL LE; SV Fort +1, Ref +7, Will +1; Str 11, Dex 17, Con 10, Int 14, Wis 11, Cha 14.

Skills: Bluff +8, Disguise +8, Gather Information +8, Hide +7, Listen +6, Knowledge (Astrology) +5, Move Silently +7, Search +7, Spellcraft +4, Spot +7, Use Magic Device +9. *Feats:* Dodge, Improved Initiative, Mobility.

Possessions: Scroll of *sleep* and *hypnotic pattern*, dagger, pouch with 19 gp.

Development: If no party members want to hear their fortunes, Madame Lamia attempts to lure them in with comments like: "Your fates are unusually clear to me. Tell me, do you seek five thieves and a merchant from afar?"

Once she has hooked a PC, and has been paid 5 gp, she tells him or her: "You seek a wizard who lives in the shadow of another wizard, and thieves who operate in the shadows of other thieves. The spirit of a man recently slain says you will find the wizard where sight meets sound and smell."

The riddle describes the location of Mantatlus's manor: The Path of Silk Flowers represents sight (the flowers, though pretty, are fake); the Avenue of Chimes represents sound; the wizard's garden (area G7) represents smell.

Interlude 2: Goldbugs

Mantatlus sends his henchmen, Gil and Holm, to assassinate the PCs if their investigation makes much progress or if he's warned by Catellian or Anteashara. Individually approaching the PCs on a busy street, they attempt to plant gold coins in the party's purses using their Pick Pocket skills. The coins—which have been treated with a light coat of contact poison—are called "goldbugs" in Night Mask lingo, a reference to a legendary insect resembling a gold coin.

continued on next page . . .

The assassins scatter if noticed, spilling goldbugs as they flee in hopes the PCs will think the cash is theirs and pick it up. PCs who handle the goldbugs must make an immediate Fortitude saving throw (DC 12), as well as a second Fortitude save 1 minute later. Failing either save results in an affected PC taking 1d3 points of Constitution damage. Note that PCs must make one save for each coin handled. Being exposed once does not make someone immune to exposure later.

Goldbugs: Contact, Fortitude save (DC 12); initial and secondary damage 1d3 temporary Constitution.

Interlude 3: Bump in the Night

At your discretion, the Night Masks might attempt to swipe Kathkallan's stash of royal jelly one night in a raid on the Silent Siren. You should wait, however, until the PCs have settled down for the night before launching the attack.

Catellion and Anteashara join the raid only if it's evident the party already knows they're Night Masks. Otherwise, the couple stays out of the skirmish, observing from the shadows across the street. If this encounter occurs after the PCs have encountered Catellian and Anteashara in the Atrium and the pair escaped, they are more than willing to test their steel against that of the characters.

Before the ambush, Gil and Holm pay to spend the night at the tavern and are feigning sleep in the shadows of the common room when the attack starts.

Mantatlus cannot scry specifically for the royal jelly, since he hasn't had contact with it, but he uses *locate object* to divine where any half-pound jars might be, then casts *summon monster I*, ordering the critters to attack whoever carries them. Gil and Holm attempt to sneak attack any PCs who don't suspect their Night Mask affiliation.

Meanwhile, the wizard uses *spider climb*, *invisibility*, and *unseen servant* as needed to swipe the jars from fallen foes.

All Night Masks in the fight concentrate on killing Kathkallan and swiping the jars of royal jelly. If the combat goes against the villains, Mantatlus runs low on spells, or the Night Masks nab the royal jelly, they each flee in separate directions. The wizard casts *invisibility* from his scroll once out of sight. His henchmen climb walls and hide on top of buildings to evade pursuers.

Experience Awards

Summarized below are the Encounter Levels (EL) for all the encounters in "Thirds of Purloined Vellum," as well as story awards for key events in the adventure.

Area	Encounter	EL
*	Thugs, Human Com1 (6)	3
C	Catellion, Male Human Rog3	3
	Anteashara, Female Human Rog1	1
	Thugs, Male Human War1 (2)	1
G	Mantatlus, Male Human Wiz4**	4
G3	*Shocking Grasp* Traps (2)	1 ea.
G7	Pillars of Parthenope	4
†	Madame Lamia, Female Human Rog4	4
†	Gil, Male Human Rog1	1
	Holm, Male Human Rog1	1

* See "Beginning the Adventure" for details.

** If Mantatlus is accompanied by Gil and Holm, this is an EL 6 encounter.

† See "Interludes" for details.

Event	Award
PCs save Kathkallan	50 XP
PCs track Galliad to The Platinum Quill	50 XP
PCs successfully question Gheldleg and Roseshade	25 XP
PCs successfully question Nashafeen	25 XP
PCs save Kathkallan from assassins	100 XP
PCs prevent the Night Masks from stealing the royal jelly	100 XP
PCs determine the location of Mantatlus and the contracts	150 XP
PCs retrieve the contracts and return them to Kathkallan	300 XP

As the DM, you must determine whether story goals are "successfully" completed by the PCs. PCs who must frequently resort to brute force or other tactics not especially suited to the adventure might only receive half experience for accomplishing a specific goal.

to Tezlir. Moreover, if any Night Masks escape, the organization learns of Kathkallan's bee farms and sends a team to destroy them.

Adventure Hooks

This module can be used as part of your ongoing campaign. Here are some adventure hooks that play off the PCs' success:

- The PCs will most definitely make an enemy of the Night Masks in this adventure. This would make any trips to or near Westgate quite interesting in the near future. In fact, having disrupted such a lucrative deal, the Night Masks will very probably take it upon themselves to put a bounty out on the PCs' heads. If Mantatlus or other Night Masks in this adventure escape, they could make excellent recurring villains.
- The merchant Kathkallan will now see the PCs as a potential ally. He might be interested in hiring them as personal guards, or possibly for his farm. If he later becomes interested in trading his royal jelly farther afield, the PCs will be the first people he calls to guard any caravans heading out of the vicinity of Tezlir and Athkatla.
- The Shadow Thieves might see the PCs as a group that can be easily manipulated into serving the guild's goals. PCs could very easily become caught up in one or more of the Shadow Thieves' plots, forced into the shady side of Athkatla through the maneuvering of the scheming guild. Ω

Graham writes: "As the managing editor of a Southern California business journal and a D&D player for 20 years, I've become fascinated by corporate intrigue, city adventures, and exotic locales. This adventure combines all three."

Make It Big
... Or Else!

by Jeff Quick

artwork by David Day • cartography by Christopher West

"Make It Big" is a D&D Side Trek adventure for four 9th-level PCs but can be modified for stronger or weaker groups as noted in the "Scaling the Adventure" sidebar below. This adventure is designed to "reward" the long-suffering player who spent skill points on underused Craft or Perform skills in the name of roleplaying. In lieu of that, a bard serves nicely. It mainly takes place in low hills near a thorp or hamlet.

| Magic Items | Monsters | Non-Player Characters (NPCs) | Objects | Settlements | Traps

Adventure Background

The hill giants of the lower slopes have enjoyed many years of plundering, smashing, and ravaging the area. They particularly enjoy picking on the nearby hamlet of Humhollow. However, after years of living in squalor, some have become dissatisfied. They want the finer things in life: good clothing, better weapons, or music to help pass the long nights.

The giants' leader, Ulk, is a little smarter than the average hill giant, and far more shrewd. He has bullied a young halfling from Humhollow named Benry into being his spy and stooge in the surrounding countryside. In return, Ulk promises that the giants won't throw rocks at Benry, his family, or their house (sometimes they do anyway).

Benry feels no loyalty to the hill giants but fears what they would do to him and his family if he disobeys or runs away. Further, he lives pretty well off the giants' discards, so he obeys.

When the PCs arrive in Humhollow, Benry reports their presence and abilities to Ulk. Ulk commands Benry to get the PCs to come to the giants' camp and use their wondrous skills and abilities to make the giants' lives more pleasant.

For the Dungeon Master

This Side Trek begins once the PCs leave Humhollow. Presumably they spent enough time there to heal up and restock supplies, meeting a few people and gaining some attachments or rumors. While there, the townsfolk might mention the giants in much the same way as an occasional natural disaster. They arrive suddenly, do some damage, and leave. The giants' raids are commonplace enough that they tolerate it with little complaint.

Lurking Behind

Once the PCs are out of sight of the town, they can make a Spot check (DC 15) to notice that they are being followed. Even if no one notices the short, skulking figure in the brush behind them, Benry reveals himself when he comes within 30 feet.

"Ladies and sirs, I apologize for creeping about, but may I speak to you for a moment? You might have heard about a band of hill giants in the area? They . . . the giants, I mean, have sent a message for you. They want you to go to their

Scaling the Adventure

This adventure was designed for four 9th-level adventurers. The challenges can be modified to suit a lower- or higher-level party as follows:

5th- to 6th-level PCs: Reduce the number of hill giants with Ulk to three; reduce the number of dire wolves to one. Remove the folding boat and 2,500 gp from the valuables cave (cave **E**).

7th- to 8th-level PCs: Reduce the number of hill giants with Ulk to five; reduce the number of dire wolves to one. Remove the folding boat and 2,000 gp from the valuables cave (cave **E**).

10th- to 11th-level PCs: Upgrade hill giants to stone giants, and dire wolves to dire bears. Add another 39,000 gp worth of treasure. Try to find treasure that will be a challenge to remove from the cave. The caves also must be enlarged to accommodate their larger occupants.

12th- to 13th-level PCs: Upgrade hill giants to stone giants and dire wolves to dire bears. Increase the number of giants with Ulk to 15 (one male, one female). Increase the number of dire creatures to five. Give Ulk two levels of fighter, and make one of the other giants a 1st-level cleric. Add another 50,000 gp worth of treasure. Try to select treasure that will be a challenge to remove from the cave. The caves must also be enlarged to accommodate their larger occupants.

camp and talk to them. If you don't, they say they will crush our town after you leave. Will you please talk to them? They want you to come today. I can lead you there. They probably won't hurt you."

Benry, Male Halfling Comz: CR 1/2; Small Humanoid (3 ft. 1 in.); HD 2d4; hp 5; Init +2; Spd 20 ft.; AC 13 (+1 size +2 Dex); Atk +3 ranged (1d4, sling); SQ halfling; AL N; SV Fort +1, Ref +3, Will +0; Str 8, Dex 15, Con 10, Int 12, Wis 9, Cha 10.

Skills: Climb +6, Handle Animal +1, Hide +6, Jump, +3, Listen +5, Move Silently +4, Profession (farmer) +3, Spot +2; *Feats:* Skill Focus (Climb).

Possessions: Sling, knife, pouch with nuts inside.

Benry sheepishly explains his "servant-boy" relationship with the giants only after the PCs pry it out of him. Benry does not want his family to find out about this; they would be scandalized. He is sure that the giants will follow through on their threat if the PCs do not come.

Report for Duty

After a couple of hours of overland travel across several steep hills, you come upon a hillside pockmarked with caves. Several small uprooted trees fuel a bonfire near the lower caves, and three female hill giants huddle around it cooking a bear on a spit. Another male hill giant stands on guard with a dire wolf on a rope. As soon as you move into view, the wolf strains against the rope, snarling and barking. The guard yells out something in Giant ("Ulk! Little people here!" for any PCs who speak Giant). Seconds later, a large, shaggy head pokes out of a cave halfway up the hillside. Then the head withdraws and a whole giant leaps out of the cave to the ground some 20 feet below.

Ulk is the only one among the giants who speaks Common. Thanks to Benry, he knows how many PCs were in town, what race each was, and how heavily armored each appeared to be. If the PCs fail to appear in the same number and proportions that Benry reported, Ulk questions them about discrepancies. Then he begins:

"You look around, and maybe you think, 'These giants got good caves, plenty to eat, lots of people to steal from . . . a pretty good life.' You're maybe wrong. We kill what we want and suck the bones of our enemies, sure, but Ulk thinks, maybe there's more."

"Benry says you little people can make stuff. So you make stuff for us and sing songs and dance for us. If you don't, we'll go crush that town," he points in the direction of Humhollow, "flat." He chuckles and seems to get lost in the thought of it. Then he snaps back and eyes you warily.

"Maybe you don't want to do that. Maybe you think you want to fight. Maybe you think you're tough. Maybe you are tough. But we're more than you. Even if you win, we still hurt you a lot. And any of us who live is gonna get that little town. So you think. You gonna help us? Or we gonna have to crush you and that town?"

Creatures (EL 15): Ulk's band consists of 9 male hill giants and 4 dire wolves, plus 4 female non-combatants. On the day he expects the PCs to arrive, he has stationed one giant in

each cave on the hillside (except for his cave, the valuables cave, and the dire wolves' cave) with a supply of five throwing rocks each. He has stationed another in the dire wolves' cave, crouched and ready to release the three wolves if the PCs attack. The other two giants move behind the PCs with the fourth dire wolf, ready to cut off their retreat.

Ulk, Male Hill Giant (1): hp 115; Int 10, Wis 12; Saves: Will +7; *Monster Manual* 98.

Feats: Cleave, Iron Will, Power Attack.

Possessions: Greatclub, bag containing 5 throwing rocks, 100 gp, hides and furs.

Hill Giants (13): hp 102 each; *Monster Manual* 98.

Dire Wolves (4): hp 45 each; *Monster Manual* 57.

Tactics: Ulk has prepared his followers for the possibility that the PCs might try to cast a spell on him. If Ulk starts acting in an unusual way, the giants have orders to grapple the PCs and subdue them into unconsciousness. If that happens, skip to the events at Bed Time. In addition, any PC who is seen casting a spell is instantly targeted with many thrown boulders.

Development: Ulk allows the PCs a few moments to discuss things. If the PCs try to fight, Ulk is prepared to fight back. If the PCs try to negotiate, Ulk is open, but impatient. He believes he has the upper hand, and he wants the PCs to get started making his life easier.

Once the PCs accept Ulk's terms, he wastes no time. He points at the primary skilled character who Benry reported on and says, *"Benry says you're good at* (fill in the blank). *'Zat so? What you need to do that?"* Any reasonable equipment the PC asks for will be appropriated from a nearby town for their use.

He then turns to each other character and asks, "What can you do?"

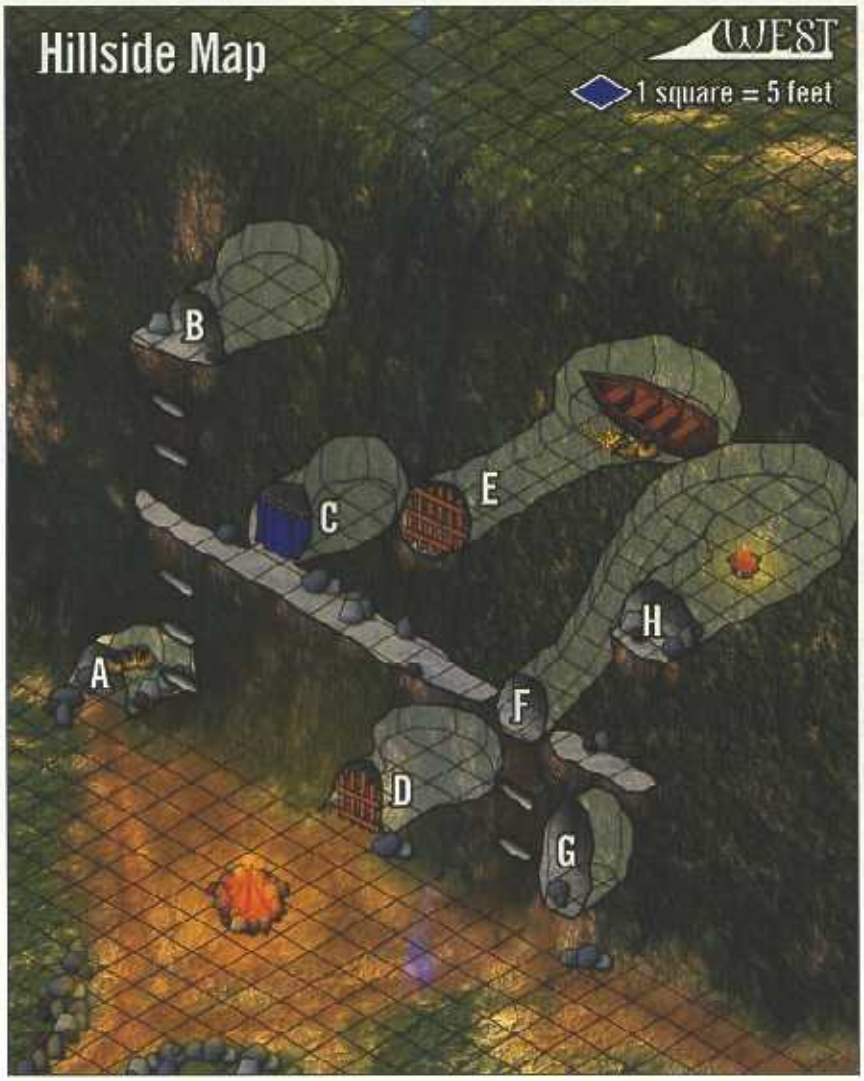
Any PC who does not claim to have any special skills will be given menial (possibly disgusting) tasks like cleaning caves, personal grooming of various members of the band, or mending the gate over the dire wolf cave.

Within a few hours, members of Ulk's band will have returned with necessary materials for nearly any mundane Craft or Perform skill. If a Craft skill is used, Ulk demands that the PC get to work. If appropriate (for Craft: cobbling, for instance), you might asses a -2 circumstance penalty against any Craft skill checks for working on a larger-than-normal scale. If it is a Perform skill, Ulk demands that all the PCs be ready to entertain at the fire that night.

Bed Time

Once night falls and any labor or performances are finished, Ulk says to the PCs:

"Okay, time for you to sleep. You're valuable, so you stay in that cave." He points to a cave up the slope, approximately 30 feet off the ground. A sturdy wooden gate blocks the entrance. "Norva and Kesk will put you there. Norva! Kesk!" He shouts orders to them in Giant. (He also says to them, "Put the other halfling in, too!")



Norva climbs up to the ledge and unlatches the gate. Kesk then roughly hands the PCs and Benry up to Norva one at a time, who deposits them in the cave (area E). Norva then closes and secures the gate.

Once the latch is secured, Ulk climbs up to the gate and presses his face against it. *"You better be there in the morning or else we crush that town, you remember? Heh heh. We got you."* Ulk is very proud of his joke.

Though usually sloppy, the giants have paid careful attention to the gate protecting this cave. The latch is heavy and secure, requiring a Strength check (DC 23) to open. Any Small character making a successful Escape Artist check (DC 15) can slip between the bars of the gate. Climbing up and down the hill is relatively easy (DC 10) but must be done quietly after hours.

Tactics: Norva and Kesk alternate guard duty at night. They do not watch carefully, however, and either giant has a 40% chance of being asleep at a given time. There are no other guards, but the

THE CAVES

The caves in the hillside serve various purposes for the giants. They have one roughly hewn ledge large enough for a giant to stand on that runs the length of the hillside 20 feet up. The topmost cave also has another, smaller ledge.

A. Storage: This cave serves as pantry for dried foods and special storage for firewood, tools, extra throwing rocks, and other items the giants want to keep handy but don't consider "valuable."

B. Females' Sleeping Cave: The female giants stay in this upper cave. They generally sleep together in a heap on a bed of furs. They have nothing of interest here. Sometimes they leave hides or food to dry on the ledge.

C. Ulk's Cave: Ulk takes the central cave for his own. Other giants are not allowed inside without his permission. Ulk also closely guards access to the female giants from here, using mating privileges as reward or punishment for his warriors. Ulk sleeps on a tapestry he stole from a traveling merchant a few weeks ago. If the PCs try to take it, it weighs about 100 pounds, and is worth 300 gp.

D. Wolf Pen: A crude wooden gate blocks this low cave where the giants keep the dire wolves penned. The wolves gnaw on the gate and press against it every time someone comes near, leaving the gate in constant need of repair. On a Strength check (DC 20), the wolves break the gate and rush to attack any living creature that isn't a giant.

E. Valuables Cave: By Ulk's command, the giants keep their valuables here locked behind a solid gate. This is also where Ulk puts the PCs at night. The valuables consists of:

- Two enormous bags of gold coins (9,000 gp, 180 pounds each). The bags are tied loosely, and one has spilled all over the floor.
- A life-sized bronze statue of a gnome paladin on a warpony (1,500 gp).
- A 4-foot tall, decorative iron urn (600 gp, 200 pounds)
- A *folding boat,* unfolded, in 24-foot-long boat form. (The giants brought it here and accidentally said the command word once inside. Now they can't change it back.)

F. Males' Sleeping Cave: This cave also opens up at cave H. Male giants who are not on guard duty sleep here. They also sleep on furs, but tend to be more territorial than the females, and sleep separately.

G. Guard Cave: When Ulk appoints a guard, he usually keeps watch from this shallow cave.

H. Sleeping Cave: This is another opening into cave F.

dire wolves all sleep lightly and receive Listen checks (made with a -4 penalty) against any PC's Move Silently check if the PCs attempt to sneak around at night. If one wolf succeeds, they all wake up and bark and growl at the PCs. The giants will be awakened by the noise, but check on the wolves before the PCs, since the "stupid wolves" do this often enough to be a nuisance. If this happens on successive nights, Ulk begins to get wise.

Doing the Job

Over the next week, the giants keep the PCs busy with various tasks. They often harass or insult the PCs, toss halflings or gnomes about, and sometimes deliberately ruin a project or performance and laugh heartily. Ulk goes out of his way to taunt the PCs, reminding them that he has the upper hand, and that if he doesn't like the job they do, he'll crush Humhollow.

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

At the end of the week, each performing or crafting character makes a skill check. If the roll fails, the giants are incensed. Ulk immediately decides to take his displeasure out on Humhollow. If the PCs take 20 or otherwise do a superior job, Ulk is so happy that he releases the other PCs, but keeps the excellent performer as a pet. If the PCs take 10 or do a merely competent job, Ulk is satisfied and simply lets the PCs go.

If the PCs killed any of the giants or wolves during the adventure, give them experience points as appropriate. If the PCs did their jobs, resisted the taunts and threats of the giants, and Humhollow stayed safe, give them experience for a CR 9 encounter. If they also managed to sneak the treasure out of the giants' caves without killing the wolves, give them experience as if they had defeated the wolves.

If the PCs kill or rout all the giants, the residents of Humhollow are very happy and offer their humble hospitality for as long as the PCs wish it. If Benry's involvement comes out, he will be shunned by the town, but not his family, although they will be sorely disappointed with him. Ω

Nodwick
by Aaron Williams
www.nodwick.com
SO, THE HILL GIANTS LET YOU GO, TOO?
YEAH. AFTER I RE-ARRANGED ULK'S LIVING ROOM TO HIS WIFE'S SPECS, THEY LOST INTEREST IN HAVING ME AROUND.
SO WHY HAVEN'T THEY RELEASED YEAGAR?
HE MUST STILL BE USEFUL TO THAT NAUGHTY BIG-STINKY, ULK!!
BUT HOW!? WHAT SERVICE COULD HE POSSIBLY PROVIDE?
I CAN'T THINK OF ANYTHING, EXCEPT--
OH NO...
...AND THAT'S A PYRAMID SCHEME. NOW, AFTER I SHOW YOU HOW TO LAUNDER MONEY, WE'LL MOVE ON TO SOME IDEAS THAT'LL NET YOU SO MUCH CASH, YOU'LL WANNA PAY ME 15% JUST TO ALLEVIATE YOUR GOLD STORAGE EXPENSES!

The Seventh Arm

Six Arms Isn't Bad Enough

by Tito Leati

artwork and cartography by Stephen Daniele

"The Seventh Arm" is a D&D adventure for four 7th-level PCs, easily adaptable for heroes of levels 3–11 and suitable as a starting point for higher-powered challenges. No particular PC classes are required to complete it successfully, although a cleric with the Law and/or Good domains could be especially useful to the party. The module can begin in any large town of the DM's campaign setting (referred to here as "the town"), with the heroes being hired by an important town official. The deities mentioned can be replaced with gods more appropriate to the campaign in which you set the adventure.

Magic Items · Monsters · Non-Player Characters (NPCs) · Objects · Settlements · Traps

Adventure Synopsis

Walking the streets of a large town after sunset, the PCs witness a local aristocrat, Kalier Goloda, being accosted by a hooded man. Frightened by the heroes, the assailant runs away, leaving his victim dying. Healed, the aristocrat explains how he was attacked by Corlag, a rogue employed by him for an espionage mission. Corlag, a trusted hireling until now, was following the tracks of a false merchant, Odals Alzota, who tried to snatch a medallion from Kalier using magic. After the failed attempt, Odals probably took refuge in the nearby Tarwood, once the home of the infamous wizard Yenejg Togan. The aristocrat asks the PC to complete Corlag's mission and to find out what has caused the rogue's murderous madness.

Odals Alzota is actually a sorcerer named Jainos Tyskie, an adventurer determined to recover a hidden treasure left by the long-dead Yenejg in a cache under Tarwood. The sorcerer knows that the wizard's old medallion, now kept into the city treasury, is a magical key to reach his objective. Needless to say, the medallion is the very one that Kalier successfully guarded against the false merchant. The recent facts and Yenejg Togan's shady background make the city treasurer fear that some evil is at work to bring ruin to his beloved and prosperous city.

After accepting Kalier's patronage, the PC can try to reconstruct the past through local rumors and an account written by Falerjan, the lawful cleric who destroyed Yenejg Togan and his demonic ally, Penfavasta. Then, after a short trip to Tarwood, the heroes must deal with the diverse monsters that still inhabit Yenejg's tower. In the tower dungeon, the encounter with Jainos Tyskie could earn them an ally or an enemy. Finally, the PCs must use the wizard's medallion and solve a puzzle to enter the former lair of the demon Penfavasta, where the Lower Planes are just a step away.

Adventure Background

Seven decades before the beginning of the adventure, an evil conjurer of demons named Yenejg Togan ruled the town for three years. In local chronicles, this harrowing time is known as the Rule of the Seventh Arm, for Yenejg was regarded as little more than a limb of his most dangerous accomplice, a marilith named Penfavasta. Before overtaking the town with a coup, the wizard lived in a secluded tower about ten miles from the city gates, built after a lifetime of adventure and magical research into the dangerous fields of summoning and necromancy. The forest around Yenejg's abode, Tarwood, was a frightful place, shunned by hunters and travelers alike.

During his first five years in Tarwood, Yenejg conducted many foul experiments in the dungeon of his tower; then, obsessed by secrecy, he started looking for a really secure place to further his activities without unwanted interference. Probing the underground with divination and elemental spells, the wizard located a nearly inaccessible cavern about 200 feet deep under a rocky hill in Tarwood. Yenejg reached the cavern easily with a *teleport* spell; once there, he worked hard to build a shrine dedicated to his craft, enslaving many extraplanar entities as guards and assistants.

In the following years, he made proselytes among criminals of the nearby city to obtain a ready supply of human sacrifices, using his sorcery to subtly beguile and corrupt many aristocrats. Finally, Yenejg summoned Penfavasta to support his definitive rise to power. He housed the marilith in his secret cavern and persuaded her to serve him with the promise of an entire town to feast upon. At first, Yenejg employed Penfavasta as an infallible assassin and unbeatable bodyguard: The wizard simply called the demon with a special medallion of his own construction, and the marilith arrived instantly using her *teleport without error* ability. Soon, all opposition was overrun by the sudden and deadly appearances of Penfavasta

SCALING THE ADVENTURE

"The Seventh Arm" was designed for four average 7th-level PCs, adding some more difficulty in the secret cavern (areas 21-34) to reward the recruitment of Jainos Tyskie in the last part of the adventure. The PCs are likely to need a period of rest before entering the secret cavern, and this could coincide with their coming back to borrow Yenejg's medallion from Kalier. The encounter with Typazkar (EL 13) can be dangerous for a 7th-level party, and you should be careful with it. Anyway, the fact that the vrock is summoned makes him a little weaker, mainly because he cannot use his ability to call other demons at his side. To adapt the adventure for higher or lower level parties, you can make the following changes:

Levels 2-3: The adventure, with its involvement with powerful outsider and deadly traps, was not written for such low-level PCs. With such an inexperienced party, you can run only the first part of the adventure, keeping Yenejg's amulet from the PCs until they are tough enough for the secret cavern. In this case, you should follow the guidelines for levels 3-4 (see below), and beef up the party with one or two NPCs from Shapic (low level clerics, druids or rangers, see the NPC tables in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*). Halve the number of bugbears, and assume that Wurzokk went away to the meet the chieftain of his tribe. Make the ghast in area 7 a normal one (4 HD), or change it into a pair of ghouls. Reduce the water elemental in area 12 to Small size. Reduce Gleir to a very low amount of hp and make her flee after being struck by a single blow. Make Jainos Tyskie treat the PCs with contempt (see "Dealing with the Sorcerer"), and let the sorcerer tell the heroes to come around when they are grown up.

Levels 3-4: Reduce by four the number of bugbear males, and assume that Gleir and Toadstool have fought to claim Corlag as a victim. Supported by the bugbears, the lamia has won, and the fiendish caretaker was killed. Toadstool's corpse can be found in area 1. The bugbears have invaded the tower and taken all of the caretaker's belongings in area 20. Gleir is still wounded when the PCs arrive in the dungeon (10 points of damage). The water elemental in area 12 should be a Medium-sized one. In the secret cavern, you should substitute the roper in area 25 with a lesser menace (some darkmantles or a single grick). Take away the vrock, replacing it with a Medium-sized air elemental instead. Reduce the damage, to hit modifiers and save DCs of the traps in areas 28-31. Let the entombed kyton in area 32 fight with only one chain. Put only one fiendish girallon in area 34. Jainos Tyskie should be only 7th level, with his *cloak of elvenkind* as the only magic item.

Levels 5-6: Reduce by two the number of bugbear males, and assume that Toadstool was struck by the illness known as the Shakes (see the *Dungeon Master's Guide* for details). The disease reduced the caretaker's Dexterity to 2 (Init -4, AC 7). The Shakes also prevent Toadstool from reloading the trap in area 1. In the secret cavern, you should substitute the roper in area 25 with some gricks. Replace the vrock in area 27 with a Large air elemental. Put only two fiendish girallons in area 34. Jainos Tyskie should be only 7th level.

Levels 8-9: Increase the number of bugbears. Give Wurzokk and Toadstool one or two warrior levels. Pump up the monster encounters in numbers and/or levels. Increase the damage, attack modifiers and save DCs of the traps in areas 28-31. Jainos Tyskie should be 9th level, with one or two additional minor magic items.

Levels 10-11: Double the number of bugbears. Give Toadstool three or four warrior levels. Pump up the monster encounters in numbers and/or levels to a greater degree. Increase the damage, attack modifiers and save DCs of the traps in areas 28-31, adding deadly spell combinations. Jainos Tyskie should be 11th level with two additional magic items. Note that a 9th-level arcane spellcaster in the party might be able to go to and from the secret cavern with his or her own *teleport* spell.

Levels higher than 11: It is not difficult to run this adventure for higher levels, due to the extra-planar nature of the monsters, the possible way to the Underdark in area 25, and the gate device in area 32. The secret cavern might be a starting point for exploring the Abyss or the bridgehead of some demonic invasion. Put a "serious" gang of demons in area 27 (see the *Monster Manual* for some nasty teams), and no PC will complain about the adventure being "too easy."

An increase or decrease of challenge in the adventure must be matched by a similar scaling of the amount of treasure. "The Seventh Arm" can deliver up to 55,000 gp worth of treasure (discounting Jainos Tyskie's belongings, which include the magic lamp in area 9). Adjust the amount of treasure as you adapt the adventure challenges.

at Yenejg's side, and the wizard became the absolute monarch of a terrified town. After his definitive victory, Yenejg amassed the treasure stolen from his slain enemies in the secret cavern, which was watched over by the ever-vigilant tanar'ri. To reach the place easily with groups of servants and victims, the wizard enchanted two special teleportation chambers: one in his old tower and one in the palace he occupied in town as the city ruler. The same medallion he used to call Penfavasta magically activated these rooms.

The next three years passed as an uninterrupted nightmare for the town populace, crushed under the oppressive and murderous rule of Yenejg, who sacrificed more and more victims to the lords of Abyss. As his power grew without control, the haggard wizard was often seen by his servants babbling nonsense and rubbing his medallion, until a sly-looking, bejeweled young woman (Penfavasta in disguise) came out of the shadows with some vile advice.

News of the unbearable sufferings of the town spread and came to the attention of the church of St. Cuthbert. Shortly thereafter, a high priest named Falerjan gathered a party of heroes and knights to overthrow the tyrant end his abominable rule. On a glorious and sunny morning, the entire population of the town arose against the wizard's troops as soon as Falerjan and his small army arrived at the city walls, opening the gates to the liberators. Later, after many hours of fighting in the streets, the high priest and his party assaulted Yenejg's palace, where Penfavasta rushed to defend the wizard in her horrible demon form. In the successive battle, all of Falerjan's henchmen fell before the marilith was finally defeated. Left alone and drained of his magical resources, Yenejg tried to run for his teleportation room in the palace, but was blocked and slain by Falerjan himself. In the night after the battle, Yenejg's palace was looted and destroyed by a mob of angry citizens. At dawn, the mad wizard's corpse was burned at the stake.

In the next months, the priesthood of St. Cuthbert re-established a lawful government in the town. The rubble of the tyrant's palace was removed and a new city hall was built over its foundations. Before departing, Falerjan wrote a brief account of his adventure and closed it in a small chest with Yenejg's medallion. The high priest gave the casket to the newly appointed city treasurer, Brolin Goloda, asking him to keep it jealously until his return. Falerjan's intention was to further his investigations on Yenejg's past activity, but not before the settling of more urgent matters. Unfortunately, the high priest, kept away by his many commitments, never came back to follow the evil wizard's tracks.

Now, after seven decades, the town has prospered, assuming its present, happier aspect. Most commoners have forgotten the Rule of the Seventh Arm, and no evidence of it has remained inside the city walls. Yenejg's tower and the secret cavern, however, still lie in the nearby Tarwood.

Eleven days before the beginning of the adventure, Kalier Goloda—the descendant of the old city treasurer—received a visit from a rich-looking, self-styled merchant of arcane and exotic goods, who introduced himself as Odals Alzota. Quite oddly, this man knew a lot about Yenejg's medallion and its current collocation in the treasure vaults of the town. Odals told Kalier that he wanted to buy the object for one of his best customers (a wealthy collector living in a distant country). The merchant offered, as an immediate payment, the sum of 500 gold pieces. Kalier was impressed by the proposal, as he barely recalled the medallion himself. For this reason, he asked for time to think about the deal and to see whether the old thing was still among the city's treasures. Odals agreed to come back three days later.

Kalier found a casket containing the medallion after a thorough search in the cellars of the city hall. He also read an attached document written by Brolin Goloda, his ancestor, which said that the object had to be kept in the treasury until the return of Falerjan, high priest of St. Cuthbert, and that nobody else should be allowed to take it. Inside the casket, beside the medallion, Kalier also found Falerjan's account, written in Celestial (a language he could not read). Even though he figured Falerjan was certainly dead of old age by now, the treasurer was bound by his ancestor's orders. He decided not to sell the medallion to the merchant, at least until he better understood the object and its history.

When Odals returned to the city hall, Kalier asked him how he knew about the medallion; the merchant calmly answered that he learned about it in a remote temple of St. Cuthbert, reading a biography of Falerjan (who had been dead for forty years). Kalier asked for three more days to "consult the city council" before selling the medallion. The merchant was visibly disappointed but agreed to this further delay, adding that the next visit would be his last and raising his bid to 600 gold pieces. After Odals departed, Kalier called Corlag, a half-elven rogue occasionally employed as a spy by the town authorities, and ordered him to shadow the merchant and gather information about him.

Corlag followed him from a local inn to the wilderness of Tarwood. Worried by grisly tales of the forest's occupants, the spy went no farther and returned to report his discovery to Kalier. After receiving this information, the city treasurer decided to keep the medallion from Odals, afraid that the merchant was somehow connected to the tyrant Yenejg Togan.

When Odals came again to buy the medallion, he faced a neat refusal. Without showing disappointment, he asked to at least see the object. At that point Kalier realized that Odals was trying some kind of magical trick (a *hypnotism* spell). Offended by the attempt, the treasurer cried for the guards and turned to draw a sword hanging on the wall. As soon as Kalier grabbed the weapon, magical *darkness* filled the room. The city hall soldiers were held at bay by a magically blocked door that defied their best efforts to break down. Panicked, Kalier slashed the air blindly as Odals uttered more arcane words only a few steps away. When the door finally gave way and the *darkness* dissipated, the sorcerous merchant was nowhere to be found.

Alarmed, Kalier ordered Corlag to enter Tarwood at once, find out whatever was there, and report on any activity. To overcome the rogue's fear of the haunted forest, the city treasurer gave him enough gold to hire a small group of mercenaries. The day after, Corlag went to Tarwood with three companions. Only Corlag returned—with an odd and insane desire to destroy his patron.

For the Dungeon Master

Yenejg Togan's isolated tower stands over a low hill in the middle of Tarwood—a ruin overgrown by trees and brush. Only a long-lived, monstrous caretaker named Toadstool was left by the evil wizard to keep an eye on his home, and nobody has entered the secret cavern below the tower for seventy years. Much of the treasure stolen from Yenejg's victims still lies in what was once Penfavasta's lair.

Four decades ago, a band of bugbears claimed part of the dungeons beneath the ruined tower, becoming a constant menace for country people living around Tarwood. A lamia named Gleir has also moved in, making a deal of mutual tolerance with the bugbears. The outnumbered Toadstool is now forced to share the place with the new occupants. At the time the adventure begins, the three groups barely tolerate each other and are unable to cooperate.

Odals Alzota is actually a chaotic neutral sorcerer (from a foreign kingdom) named Jainos Tyskie. Jainos is a dedicated treasure hunter with a greedy passion for magic items, but he has another, stronger motivation to seek Yenejg's hoard. One of his ancestors, a city notable before the Rule of the Seventh Arm, was murdered by Penfavasta, who snatched from him a magical ring passed on for generations in the Tyskie family. Jainos wants to recover this item at all costs. The sorcerer has gained most of his remarkable knowledge about Yenejg's medallion and Penfavasta's lair with the clever use of a recently encountered quasit's *commune* ability. (His invention of Falerjan's biography is a plausible one: Even if the high priest was known for his habit to write memories of his adventures, nobody ever compiled an account of his whole life.)

A month before his first meeting with the city treasurer, Jainos moved to Tarwood and, thanks to his sorcerous powers and false charm, was able to deal with its chaotic evil occupants. After finding Yenejg's teleportation room in the dungeon beneath the wizard's tower, he devised a trick to acquire the medallion necessary for its activation. Unfortunately for him, the keeper of the item—Kalier Goloda—was strong and lucky enough to resist the sorcerer's *hypnotism* spell. His attempt thwarted, Jainos escaped the city. Since then, the sorcerer has been trying to think of another plan to steal the Yenejg's medallion, so far excluding the possibility of

revealing his true identity and telling the stubborn aristocrat the truth.

Two days before the beginning of the adventure, Corlag's party, sent to investigate Tarwood, met the humanoid dwellers of Yenejg's tower with disastrous results. All three of the half-elf's companions were killed by the bugbears in an ambush; Corlag escaped only to meet the terrible lamia, who used *charm person* to beguile him and learn about his mission. To retaliate against Kalier, the instigator of Corlag's intrusion, the lamia used her *suggestion* ability on the half-elf to increase his resentment toward the aristocrat for causing the death of his friends. Finally, the lamia sent Corlag back to the city, knowing that the half-elf's anger would cause a lot of trouble to his patron and himself. Jainos advised against this decision, afraid of too much trouble with the town authorities, but this served only to further motivate the evil and whimsical lamia to do just as she wanted. The outcome of Corlag's aggression on Kalier, the last background event before the PCs arrive on the scene, is described in the "Beginning the Adventure" section.

Beginning the Adventure

The adventure begins in town. The following text assume that the PCs are walking the streets past sunset:

> As you walk in a deserted street, lit by a few suspended lanterns, you notice the flickering of candles behind the thick glass of a large, second-story window of a nearby, well-appointed building. Suddenly, the soft light is dimmed and made intermittent by the shadows of two fast-moving figures who seem to be having some sort of conflict inside the house. In a brief moment of stasis, you glimpse a lean, hooded man grasping the throat of a robust opponent. The latter raises a dagger, but the first catches his wrist to stop the incoming stab. After a few more instants of furious struggle, the window explodes in a shower of glittering shards as the robust figure is thrown outside. The man falls without a cry, hitting the ground on a strip of grassy soil with a dull thump. The hooded man leans out of the broken window and puts a foot on the sill, apparently ready to jump down. However, he sees you and darts back inside. The fallen man moves slightly and utters a painful moan.

The PCs have two obvious choices: aid the victim or pursue the hooded man. Soon they hear the crash of another broken window toward the rear of the building, followed by the warning cries and running steps of the city watch.

Aiding the Victim

This is simply a must for good PCs. Even a cursory examination of the man reveals that he is dying due to the wounds received in the struggle and subsequent fall. Before fainting, he has only the strength to whisper: "That thief! Catch him!" A successful Heal skill check (DC 15) or any curative magic is sufficient to stabilize the victim and save his life.

Creature (EL 2): The victim—a middle-aged man wearing a fur-lined tunic and a golden necklace—is the aforementioned Kalier Goloda.

Kalier Goloda, Male Human Ari4: CR 3; Medium-size Humanoid (5 ft. 9 in. tall); HD 4d8+8; hp 27 (currently -1); Init -1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 9 (-1 Dex); Atk +3 melee (now unarmed) or +2 ranged (now unarmed); AL LN; SV Fort +2, Ref +0, Will +4; Str 11, Dex 9, Con 12, Int 13, Wis 11, Cha 13.

Skills: Appraise +8, Bluff +3, Diplomacy +4, Forgery +6, Listen +5, Profession (scribe) +5, Ride +5, Sense Motive +3, Spot +4, Swim +3; *Feats:* Iron Will, Skill Focus (Appraise), Skill Focus (Profession—scribe).

Possessions: Noble's outfit, four golden rings set with gems (worth 420 gp, 270 gp, 240 gp, and 150 gp), golden necklace (worth 300 gp), 35 gp in pouch. Kalier is a very rich man who can obtain any kind of expensive equipment. His fortune amounts to no less than 20,000 gp, including a half dozen buildings within the city walls. He also owns a masterwork breastplate and many fine horses and weapons.

Pursuing the Hooded Man

The main entrance to the house is locked from inside, and all of the first-story windows are closed by iron bars. A nimble PC could quickly climb a rain-pipe (Climb, DC 15) and reach the broken window. Forcing the door or looking for another way in wastes time. The best choice is to circle the building and pursue the hooded man in the streets. If the PCs head for the noise of shattered glass, either passing through the house or running around it, they see the lean stranger jumping from a rear window across a narrow alley; he lands on the eaves of another building and runs nimbly toward a cluster of slums.

Locked Wooden Door: 2 in. thick; Hardness 5; hp 20; Open Lock (DC 28); Break (DC 22).

Creature (EL 5): The hooded figure—Corlag—is quick. Only exceptional swiftness or magic will allow PCs to chase him effectively in the darkness.

This encounter is ideal to stage a dangerous pursuit over the rooftops, where rogues, monks, and agile, lightly armored PCs can shine. Spells such as *jump, spider climb, levitate, fly,* and *air walk* are quite useful in this situation.

To run the pursuit, follow the guidelines below:

• First, the players must just declare which members of the party try to pursue the hooded man: This has to be a quick decision, and you should immediately cut out from the chase any PC who does not state his intent within 30 seconds of real time. Heroes wearing medium or heavy armor will have a difficult time keeping up unless they have some method of enhancing their speed (*boots of striding and springing* or a *haste* spell, for example). To reach the roofs and start the pursuit, a PC must ascend a ladder from the street (Climb, DC 0) or leap from the same window used by Corlag to leave Kalier's house (Jump, DC 14).

• Choose a series of obstacles that the PCs must overcome to keep up with the fugitive in the "Pursuit Events" table. The chase, which happens in the moderate darkness of a moonlit night (one-quarter concealment), is a quick and unpredictable situation, with the PCs constantly on the move, getting glimpses of Corlag as he dashes in the shadows, hides behind chimneys, and jumps over dormer windows.

• To overcome a given obstacle, a PC must succeed in what is referred to as a "key roll" (a skill check). Failing one of these rolls, which are much like the crucial moments of an action movie sequence, cuts a PC out of the chase. (Kind DMs might allow two failures if the PC does not fall to street level with the first one.) Overcoming four obstacles should be enough to stop Corlag's escape (see "The Fatal Jump").

• Roll Corlag's skill checks only when they must be opposed with those of PCs; grant him an automatic success otherwise. This advantage should balance the many resources of the typical party of adventurers.

• Except during events #5 and #6 in the "Pursuit Events" table, the heroes might target the half-elf (who is usually 60 feet away) with a ranged attack or spell. A PC who does so, however, loses a few precious seconds aiming and should be given a -4 penalty to the next key roll needed to keep up with the fugitive. Corlag's uncanny dodge ability allows him to use his Dexterity bonus to AC against any attack targeting him while he is running.

• Flying PCs can successfully pursue and target Corlag at the same time, automatically overcoming most obstacles (events #1-6 in the adjacent table). They can also charge the fugitive with a melee weapon. You must adjudicate the effect of other spells depending on the situation.

• Corlag is particularly vulnerable to Enchantment spells due to his reduced Wisdom. The use of *hold person* or similar magic to take him alive, however, could not be a wise choice, as any kind of sudden confusion or paralysis causes the half-elf to fall from the roofs (assume a height of 1d3+1 × 10 feet). Corlag also falls if disabled (0 hit points) or knocked unconscious by a ranged attack.

Corlag, Male Half-elf Rog5: CR 5; Medium-size Humanoid (5 ft. 8 in. tall); HD 5d6; hp 23 (currently 15); Init +3 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 15 (+3 Dex, +2 leather armor); Atk +4 melee (1d6+1/crit 18-20, rapier) or +6 ranged (1d4/crit 19-20.

PURSUIT EVENTS

Each result in the following table occurs only once, with the exception of event #7. Mark results that come up and consider those that have been already rolled as "7" instead.

Roll 1d8

1 Corlag reaches the top of a 10-foot-high section of stone wall that stretches between two towers. **Key roll:** PCs must make a Climb check (DC 10) to follow him.

2 Corlag traverses a roof along a steep pitch covered by tiles. When the heroes run after him, a tile slides under the foot of one randomly determined PC. **Key roll:** The character must make a Balance check (DC 15) to avoid slipping. If the PC fails, she falls on the tiles, rolls down the pitch, and hits a chimney near the roof edge, taking 1d4 points of damage. A successful Tumble check (DC 10) negates the damage.

3 A PC sees Corlag as he jumps from the roof of a 20-foot-tall house to the top of another building 10 feet away. **Key roll:** PCs must make a Jump check (DC 15) to reach the other building. The first PC who fails manages to grab a poorly repaired gutter that runs along the roof. It gives way under the PC's weight and tears from the wall. A moment later, the PC finds himself hanging in mid-air at a height of 20 feet. He can jump down voluntarily to reduce falling damage (Jump, DC 15) or proceed along the squeaking and tottery gutter to reach the safety of a balcony (Climb, DC 15). PCs who fail after this simply fall to the street below.

4 Corlag steps over a tight, 20-foot-long laundry line to reach the eaves of a nearby building. The heroes glimpse him as he leaps off the rope. The thick hemp line has an old wool rug stretched over it, held in place by a row of wooden clips. **Key roll:** The pursuing PC must succeed at a Balance check (DC 15) or Jump check (DC 25). Failing either check means the PC falls 20 feet to the street below. The first PC to fall can try to grab the rug (Reflex save, DC 10). If he manages to catch it, the wooden clips snap open one after the other in a few seconds, reducing the falling damage by 1d6 points. PCs who fail after this fall to the street.

5 The fugitive disappears from sight and gets a chance to hide in the rooftop shadows. **Key roll:** At least one PC must succeed at a Spot check (opposed by Corlag's Hide result) to continue the chase.

6 The hooded man disappears from sight for a moment but must walk across a creaky wooden ledge to get away. **Key roll:** A PC who makes a successful Listen check (opposed by Corlag's Move Silently result, made with a -2 circumstance penalty due to the creaking of the ledge) can determine the direction he headed.

7 Corlag turns and shoots the lead PC with his hand crossbow at a range of 60 feet (two range increments). **Key roll:** If Corlag hits, the PC must make a Balance check (DC 5 plus any damage suffered) to avoid swaying in a precarious situation and losing precious time.

8 A flock of startled bats flies into the lead PC. **Key roll:** The PC must make a Concentration check to avoid being distracted by the bats' shrieking and fluttering (DC 10). If the check fails, the PC must then make a Reflex saving throw (DC 10) to dodge a bat heading straight for his face. Failure results in a collision with the bat that deals 1 point of damage to the PC.

hand crossbow); SQ evasion, sneak attack +3d6, uncanny dodge (Dex bonus to AC); AL N; SV Fort +1, Ref +7, Will -2; Str 12, Dex 17, Con 11, Int 14, Wis 5, Cha 10.

Skills: Balance +10, Climb +10, Decipher Script +4, Disable Device +5, Escape Artist +6, Gather Information +6, Hide +7, Jump +10, Listen +4, Move Silently +7, Open Lock +7, Pick Pocket +7, Ride +6, Search +8, Spot +4, Swim +3, Tumble +4, Use Rope +4. *Feats:* Alertness, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (hand crossbow).

Possessions: Leather armor, rapier, dagger, hand crossbow with 10 bolts, climber's kit, crowbar, thief's tools, 9 gp in pouch.

The Fatal Jump

If no PCs keep up with him, Corlag escapes in the darkness. He is not under the effect of the lamia's *suggestion* anymore, but an overwhelming fear of the consequences of his latest actions keeps him away from the city for the rest of the adventure.

On the other hand, if the PCs were determined and lucky enough in the dangerous pursuit, award Corlag's XP value to the party and read or paraphrase the following:

> The hooded man tries to speed his escape, but he begins to show signs of fatigue. Once more, he dashes out of sight on the roof of an abandoned building; a moment later, a loud crash followed by a piercing cry shakes the cold air of the night. The subsequent noise of falling timber and broken tiles marks the end of the hooded man's escape.

Corlag's recklessness made him jump over the unsafe roof of an old warehouse; the rotten timbers gave way under his weight and the half-elf fell inside from a height of 30 feet. The subsequent collapse of a large section of the roof over the rogue's head made the fall even more deadly (a total of 6d6 points of damage). Since Corlag drops inside the building, it is impossible for the PCs to save him with a *feather fall* spell. When the fracas of the collapse stops, two or three voices from the nearby dwellings complain about the noise in an "unorthodox" way.

The PCs can gain access to the warehouse by climbing down from the roof, a task made quite dangerous by the instability of the structure (Climb check, DC 20, failure means the PC falls and takes 3d6 points of damage). Otherwise, they can break through the building's only wooden door, now spiked shut to keep squatters out.

Spiked Wooden Door: 2 in. thick; Hardness 5; hp 10; Break (DC 16).

Once inside, the heroes find Corlag lying supine on the floor with his head split by a fallen roof tile. The young half-elf wears a burglar's tight leather outfit and carries some of a rogue's typical equipment. Any PC who inspects Corlag's body and succeeds at a Search check (DC 13) notices an odd sign among the rogue's many wounds: the recent mark of what looks like a lion's claw (actually a lamia's) on the left collarbone. If Corlag died from the fall, which is likely, PCs can use *speak with dead* spells to get information. If Corlag's fall is a non-lethal one, the PCs have the opportunity to interrogate the rogue once he regains consciousness.

If the PCs interrogate Corlag, he is shocked and babbles about how he was magically persuaded to attack Kalier Goloda. Corlag claims to have been enslaved by sorcery, but his memory has been seriously compromised by being *charmed* and drained of almost all his Wisdom. For these reasons, the half-elf's words seem contradictory or implausible. Corlag remembers a headlong escape from a deadly bugbear ambush in Tarwood, where his three companions fell. He also vaguely recalls a meeting with a girl dressed in rags, imprisoned in a cellar, who claimed to be the captive of an evil wizard. Corlag concludes by saying that he did not want to kill Kalier but was angry at him for sending his party into a deathtrap. If he's still alive when the town guard shows up, Corlag is tightly chained by the town guards and locked in the city dungeon until the end of the adventure. Lawful good PCs might feel a moral need to prove the unintentional nature of Corlag's crime and save him from an unfair and harsh punishment. If given the chance to return to Tarwood, though, the half-elf says that he prefers to remain in prison.

The City Watch Arrives

Guards arrive at Kalier's house shortly after the chase ends, as they were instructed by the aristocrat to check the building frequently. The house serves as the treasurer's new dwelling, but he has not yet moved in. Kalier keeps just a small study on the first floor, where he can deal behind-the-scenes work with ease and meet people in absolute privacy. It is here where the city treasurer met Corlag to receive his first report some days ago (see "Adventure Background").

Creatures (EL 5): The head of the incoming patrol, Warder Wilsk, uses a *potion of cure light wounds* to revive Kalier, if necessary. The PCs on the scene are briefly and respectfully interrogated by Wilsk about what they have seen. Kalier is carried on a makeshift stretcher to the city hall to receive further healing. Guards are posted at the entrance and inside the rooms with the two broken windows. The heroes are not allowed inside until after their talk with Kalier next morning. If a stealthy or invisible PC wants to sneak past the sentinels and take a look at the fresh crime scene, he finds no useful clues inside what looks like a newly built, nearly empty dwelling of a rich official. The key to the front door and a masterwork dagger, both lost by Kalier during the struggle, lie on the floor of his private study upstairs.

If Corlag is killed or captured by the PCs in the abandoned warehouse, the same city watch patrol encountered near Kalier's house shows up after a while, eventually taking care of the half-elf (his body or his person) and helping the heroes out of any trouble with angry citizens.

Warder Wilsk, Male Human Ftr3: CR 3; Medium-size Humanoid (5 ft. 10 in. tall); HD 3d10; hp 24 (including Toughness); Init +1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 17 (+1 Dex, +5 chainmail, +1 small shield); Atk +6 melee (1d8+3/crit x3, *+1 battleaxe*), or +5 ranged (1d8+1/crit 19-20, light crossbow with *+1 bolts*); AL LN; SV Fort +3, Ref +2, Will +1; Str 14, Dex 13, Con 11, Int 8, Wis 11, Cha 10.

Skills: Handle Animal +2, Climb +4, Intimidate +3, Ride +4, Swim +3; *Feats:* Power Attack, Skill Focus (Intimidate), Toughness, Weapon Focus (battleaxe), Weapon Focus (light crossbow).

Possessions: +1 battleaxe, potion of cure light wounds, chainmail, small wooden shield, light crossbow with 10 bolts and 4 *+1 bolts*, 13 gp in pouch.

Soldiers, Male Humans War1 (4): CR 1/2; Medium-size Humanoid; HD 1d8; hp 12 each (including Toughness); Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 15 (+5 chainmail); Atk +2 melee (1d10+1/crit x3,

glaive); AL LN; SV Fort +3, Ref +0, Will +0; Str 12, Dex 11, Con 13, Int 8, Wis 10, Cha 8.

Skills: Handle Animal +2, Climb +3, Ride +2, Swim +3. *Feats:* Toughness, Weapon Focus (glaive).

Possessions: Chainmail, glaive, short sword.

Meeting with Kalier

Kalier has ready access to the most powerful healing magic in town due to his high rank, and he is cured to full health in a matter of hours. The morning after Corlag's attack, if they respond to his invitation, the PCs have a meeting with the city treasurer, who explains what he knows of the "Adventure Background" section. Quite predictably, the treasurer wants the PCs to explore Tarwood and learn the whereabouts of Odals Alzota. Kalier describes the false merchant as a slender young man about 30 years old, with penetrating black eyes, long dark hair tied in braid, and expensive purple clothes. This description can be useful to the PCs, as Jainos Tyskie's "disguise" as Odals Alzota is just a change of clothing and hairstyle. If a PC looks honorable enough (most good-aligned PCs should qualify) the treasurer offers an advance of 300 gp for the party's services (directly taken from the pockets of the town taxpayers). Kalier promises a much larger reward depending on the party's success, as well as the gratitude of the city council. The treasurer also shows the medallion and Falerjan's parchment to the heroes. If a PC is able to read Celestial, present her with a copy of the cleric's account (see the adjacent handout). Otherwise, the PCs need a *comprehend languages* spell or a successful Decipher Script check (DC 25). If all else fails, Kalier finds a lazy city hall scribe who is foolish enough to admit his knowledge of the Celestial tongue; the scribe is instructed to translate the document but cannot have it finished before dawn of the next day.

The wooden casket containing Falerjan's account is plain and unremarkable. Also stashed inside is a piece of parchment with a note written (in Common) by Brolin Goloda. It reads: "This box contains the medallion of the accursed Yenejg Togan, left in the city treasury's custody by Falerjan, high priest of St. Cuthbert. Only he or his brothers can retrieve it."

Yenejg's medallion is a unique magic item described in "The Marilith's Disk" sidebar.

Falerjan's Tale

Summer, 521 CY

This is to remember how we, the faithful upholders of law, destroyed the tyrant of this town, Yenejg Togan, thus ending the abominable Rule of the Seventh Arm.

At daybreak, we moved to free the city with just a small army, led by the loyal knights who gathered at our temple. A great uprising of the town population, however, supported our challenge. This was good, as it is fair and just to rebel against chaos.

The citizens opened the main gate for us, and we swept like a righteous storm into the streets, bringing doom to the soldiers of evil. After half a day, the entire town was free, and Yenejg Togan, his entire army routed, took refuge in his palace. We broke inside before dusk, with the face of Pelor still shining in the sky, but every chamber was magically dark and filled with the hideous screams and howls of demons. Only the bravest could follow me all the way to the great hall, where the tyrant was waiting for his enemies.

"Who are you, fool?" he asked, pointing his finger at me.

"St. Cuthbert has decreed that chaos shall not rule here!" was my answer.

Then, the wizard's horrible ally came slithering out from the darkness—a six-armed virago with a serpentine tail. The demon, Penfavasta, attacked us at once, her six hands clutching diverse weapons. The fight was glorious and terrible. All my companions fell before Penfavasta was finally destroyed by the power of St. Cuthbert. Finally engulfed by holy fire, the writhing and screaming demon was blasted out of existence.

Drained of his power, Yenejg Togan, now little more than a madman, slipped down from his seat like an empty bag, clutching a small object near his chest. He made as if to run but was swiftly crushed by my mace. The hour of retribution had come.

Between his fingers, I found what was probably Yenejg's most prized possession—an item deeply stepped in the same chaotic sway of the creature depicted on it: Penfavasta the marilith. With the wizard's death, the cloak of fear and darkness that hung over the palace was lifted, and a mob of furious people rushed in to loot and destroy everything. Exhausted and grieving for the death of my companions, I could do little more than watch how much the reign of the evil wizard had filled every heart with hate and unruly vengeance. The next morning, the body of Yenejg Togan was burned in the same place where his minions had executed many innocents in the past three years.

Now, the time has come to restore a lawful government in this town, with the hope that the tragic days of the Rule of the Seventh Arm are gone forever.

Honor and glory to St. Cuthbert.

Falerjan

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Taking Yenejg's Medallion

To borrow the medallion from Kalier—according to Brolin's document—a PC should be a cleric of St. Cuthbert. Skillful PC oratory, however, can twist the most obvious meaning of the word "brothers" to include other good clerics, paladins, or just lawful neutrals (St. Cuthbert's alignment). At this point in the adventure (the meeting with Kalier), this is a difficult check to make (Diplomacy, DC 24). The PCs will have a much better chance of convincing Kalier to loan them the medallion if they come back after finding Yenejg's teleportation room in the dungeons of his tower (the DC then drops to 16). If the PCs are willing to make a refundable deposit of at least 1,000 gp, they receive a +5 circumstance bonus to these checks. If the PCs double the deposit, there's no need for the Diplomacy check. Kalier savors the shine of 2,000 gold pieces.

After learning of its importance, the city treasurer keeps the medallion tied to his belt at all times, even if aware of its bad luck effect: There, a successful Pick Pocket check (DC 20, with Kalier's opposed Spot check affected by the medallion's curse) can succeed where negotiations have failed. Stealing from the city treasurer can bring the heroes lots of trouble, but defeating Kalier's stubbornness in this fashion should earn them the aristocrat's full XP value.

THE MARILITH'S DISK

The medallion is a bronze disk 4 inches in diameter and half an inch thick. On its surface is engraved the menacing image of a marilith, with her head surmounted by an eight-pointed star. A small hole at the center of the star is large enough for a thread to pass through, suggesting that the object can be worn around the neck or tied to a wearer's belt. The bronze disk is the key to activate Yenejg's teleportation room; the engraved marilith provides a clue on the procedure to follow.

The medallion radiates Transmutation and Conjuration magic. Its durability is that of bronze (hardness 8, hp 20), but fire and acid have little effect on it (treat as fire and acid resistance 30). If rubbed, it vibrates and gives off a supernatural tingle: a tangible sign of its long-lost ability to warn Penfavasta from a distance.

The medallion brings misfortune to lawful or good bearers (it gives a -2 luck penalty to saving throws and skill checks, or roll on the table in *Dragon Magazine* #276, page 37). Moreover, the medallion is the key for a magic door in Yenejg's secret cavern (see area 23). Its four properties (warn a demon, activate a *teleport* device, open a magic door, and bring bad luck), can be detected in that order by subsequent *identify* spells. (*Analyze dweomer* reveals all the properties of the medallion at once).

Bits of Folklore

At this point, the PCs should have enough information to make plausible conjectures about the entire story, especially if they both translated Falerjan's account and were able to interrogate Corlag. However, nobody knows anything certain about Yenejg's old tower, and most people in town are not even sure it exists. Moreover, the city records about the Rule of the Seventh Arm were destroyed in the same fire that obliterated Yenejg's palace.

A bard in the party can recall a song about a six-armed tyrant who "changed a forest of trees into a forest of houses" (bardic knowledge, DC 19), but nothing more. PCs looking for clues in the city can find the following:

- With a successful Gather Information check (DC 10), a PC overhears a busy innkeeper's wife rebuking her mischievous kid with these words: "If you don't behave, Toadstool will take you away!" Most town citizens know Toadstool as sort of a local bogeyman used by housewives to scare children, and they describe him as a hopping fellow with stained skin and an enormous mouth. The figure behind this "popular" character is the caretaker of Yenejg's tower in Tarwood, once employed by his power-hungry master in many raids to capture human sacrifices. When the heroes get this information, you can also give them hints about Toadstool's special abilities (see "The Tower Co-ownership" sidebar).
- With a successful Gather Information check (DC 13), a PC sees many citizens stopping by a wall of the town hall square, touching what looks like a statue in a niche. An old man with a crutch, a shock of white hair and a patch on his left eye begs for charity nearby. The 3-feet-tall marble statue represents St. Cuthbert—a memento of Falerjan's victory—and is still in good shape. The god's mace, however, is highly polished by the touch of worshipers over the years. If a PC drops a coin in the beggar's bowl, he says: "Thanks, sir! Don't forget to rub St. Cuthbert's mace for good luck!" Although this sounds of superstition, touching the statue's mace grants a +2 luck bonus to the next saving throw or skill check made by a lawful good or lawful neutral character who follows the old man's advice (you might determine a variable effect rolling on the table in *Dragon Magazine* #276, page 39). The beggar, Chevreg, is one of the oldest men in town and was only an 8-year-old boy when Falerjan came to free the town from Yenejg Togan's grasp. Chevreg's father took part in the uprising against the Rule of the Seventh Arm and in the pillaging of the old palace: "I remember that my father was quite disappointed with his share of treasure; they tore apart the building without finding more than one third of what was supposedly stolen during the previous three years. As you can see, the descendants of those heroic rebels are still having serious financial problems." Chevreg's words hint at the high probability that a large part of Yenejg's treasure remains undiscovered.

Traveling to Tarwood

When the PCs set out to Tarwood, they must follow a well-traveled road to Shapic, a small village of hunters three miles away. From there, however, only a few game trails lead into the forest. No remarkable encounters bother the party during the short and pleasant trip to Shapic.

The Hamlet of Shapic

Shapic consists of only two large, three-story wooden buildings surrounded by a neatly kept orchard and circled by a tall

fence. Each building houses a dozen families that live in small flats and share a huge common room. These jointly owned houses look somewhat massive, but their balloon-frame structure makes them comfortable. The inhabitants of Shapic, mostly humans and half-elves, worship Ehlonna and lead a community-centered life. A few of them are low-level druids and rangers. Although a peaceful people, they can be fierce defenders if their home is threatened.

When the heroes arrive, they receive a polite welcome. If they behave in a friendly manner, perhaps making a tasteful non-monetary gift, the villagers offer them a night free of charge in a cozy guestroom. The village of Shapic has no ruler beyond a democratic assembly of all the male and female adult citizens, presided over by Bria, the eldest resident.

Shapic (Fortified Hamlet): Conventional; AL NG; 50-gp limit; Assets 5,000 gp; Population 180; Mixed (human 80%, half-elf 15%, halfling 5%).

Authority Figures: Bria, female human Clr4 (Ehlonna).

Important Characters: Piasem, male human Rgr3.

Others: Clr2 (x1), Clr1 (x3), Drd2 (x2), Drd1 (x5), Rgr2 (x4), Rng1 (x6), Exp2 (x3), Exp1 (x6), Com1 (x150).

Notes: Due to their religious natures, most of Shapic's citizens are neutral good. Prices in Shapic never exceed the *Player's Handbook* rates, and locally produced items (wool clothing, tanned pelts) are usually discounted by 50%. In spite of Shapic's very low gp limit, a PC making a successful Gather Information check (DC 17) can find a *quiver of Ehlonna* on sale for only 1,200 gp. The quiver belongs to Piasem, a generous 63-year-old hunter who wants to give a rich dowry to a niece living in a nearby kingdom.

Bria, the eldest woman in the hamlet, is 72 years old and recently widowed. She is a priestess of Ehlonna and an excellent cook as well. Bria offers the PC a loaf of fresh bread and bowl of venison stew, and she can give them the following information on Tarwood:

• A tribe of bugbears has infested Tarwood for the past forty years, and the inhabitants of Shapic have fought them many times. Fourteen years ago, after an exceptionally harsh winter, a large group of bugbears tried to seize the village. Luckily, they were soundly beaten, and their losses were so high that they withdrew to the innermost part of Tarwood. Since then, they have been seen only on rare occasions. Delving inside the forest is still considered dangerous for inexperienced hunters, though, and many rash boys and careless girls have disappeared there in years past.

• If the heroes declare their bold intention to challenge the bugbears in their territory, Bria shows them a rusty, nasty-looking arrowhead that slew a hunter four months ago. The arrow was poisoned with Blistermusk, a bugbear concoction that causes the skin to burst in painful sores around a cut (Injury DC 15; Initial 0; secondary 1d3 Dex plus 1d3 Con). Bria thinks she can prepare a poultice to fight off the effects of this substance, but she is not sure how well it will work. She prepares and gives the PCs three doses of poultice, tightly wrapped in sweet-smelling leaves, warning that its effectiveness wears off quickly (two days). The poultice is effective during this period, but only if it's smeared over the wound before the secondary effect of Blistermusk takes place (it prevents but does not cure the poison's damage).

• Yenejg's tower stands near the center of Tarwood, about fifteen miles southwest from Shapic. Many hunters spotted it in the past, but nobody in the village has seen it since a great earthquake ravaged the region thirty years ago.

• Both Corlag and Jainos Tyskie (disguised as Odals Alzota) have visited Bria to buy some food in the past two weeks. The wise woman did not like either of them much, but she remembers the merchant as quite an interesting man, smiling often in spite of some kind of personal obsession. Bria does not know about Odals's business in Tarwood, though.

Bria, Female Human Clr4 (Ehlonna): CR 4; Medium-size Humanoid (5 ft. 4 in. tall); HD 4d8; hp 17; Init -2 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 8 (-2 Dex); Atk +2 melee (1d8-1, *+1 longsword*); or +1 ranged (1d4, sling); SA spells, turn undead; AL NG; SV Fort +4, Ref -1, Will +6; Str 7, Dex 6, Con 10, Int 13, Wis 15, Cha 14.

Skills: Diplomacy +2, Heal +4, Knowledge (nature) +5, Knowledge (religion) +3, Profession (cook) +5, Sense Motive +2, Spellcraft +2. *Feats:* Brew Potion, Martial Weapon Proficiency (longsword), Skill Focus (Profession—cook).

Spells Prepared (5/5/4; base DC = 12 + spell level): 0—*create water, light, purify food and drink, resistance, virtue;* 1st—*bless, calm animals*, detect evil, divine favor, protection from evil;* 2nd—*aid, hold animal*, hold person, remove paralysis.*

*Domain spell. *Domains:* Animal (can cast *animal friendship* once per day), Good (cast good spells at +1 caster level).

Possessions: +1 longsword, sling with 10 bullets, wooden holy symbol (Ehlonna), 40 gp and 4 gems (worth 50 gp each) in pouch.

Piasem, Male Human Rgr3: CR 3; Medium-size Humanoid (5 ft. 11 in. tall); HD 3d10; hp 21; Init -1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 11 (-1 Dex, +2 leather); Atk +2 melee (1d6-1/1d6-1, quarterstaff) or +2 ranged (1d8/crit x3, longbow); SQ Track, favored enemy (goblinoids), fight with two weapons; AL NG; SV Fort +3, Ref +0, Will +2; Str 9, Dex 8, Con 11, Int 13, Wis 13, Cha 12.

Skills: Animal Empathy +5, Hide +2, Listen +4, Move Silently +2, Intuit Direction +4, Knowledge (nature) +4, Ride +1, Spot +3, Swim +1, Wilderness Lore +7. *Feats:* Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Skill Focus (Wilderness Lore).

Possessions: quiver of Ehlonna, leather armor, quarterstaff, dagger, longbow with 20 arrows, wooden holy symbol (Ehlonna), 12 gp in pouch.

Northern Tarwood

The heroes can start their journey at one of the game trails that lead out of Shapic and into the forest. Then, as there are no paths to reach their destination, they must hope to sight Yenejg's tower from a distance as soon as possible.

In the trackless meanders of Tarwood, a typical party can proceed at just one mile per hour. Horses are more a nuisance than an advantage in this environment, and Shapic could be a safe place to leave mounts behind. The weather is fair, and it remains like that for the duration of the adventure. While proceeding in the forest, PCs can try to reach the top of a tree (Climb, DC 15) and attempt to spot the ruins of the old tower (Spot, DC 7 per each mile of distance). Heroes who *levitate* or fly above the forest canopy gain a +10 circumstance bonus to the Spot check, as do spellcasters with a winged familiar. From a distance, Yenejg's tower looks nothing more than a pile of gray rubble, badly damaged but still more than 30 feet tall. If the heroes can't see the tower, they must state their direction of movement (north, south, and so on); otherwise they can move straight to their destination.

The bugbears, alarmed by recent events, have set many traps and snipers in the area, hoping to catch something more full-bodied than Corlag's three sinewy friends. Every half hour, the PCs might have a random encounter. Roll 1d20 and multiply the result by two: If the total is higher than the DC for sighting the tower from the party's current position, something befalls the heroes on the way (see the "Forest Random Encounters" table). See the map below for DC values.

Bugbear Hunt

Any bugbear hunters the PCs encounter belong to a band that dwells in the dungeon beneath Yenejg's tower. The oldest and most powerful male, Wurzokk, is their leader. The band is part of a larger bugbear tribe that lives ten miles away, beyond the stream running southwest of Yenejg's tower.

If heroes camp outdoors at night after their first encounter with a bugbear (a sniper or the hunters from the "Random Forest Encounters" table), they might hear the sound of a bugbear trumpet coming from the tower (Listen, DC 4 per mile from the tower). This is a muster signal for the bugbears: All males, including hunters and snipers still out in the woods, rally near the tower. Then, led by Wurzokk, they set out to hunt the intruders, leaving the females at home. The bugbears go first to the place where the PCs were spotted last and Wurzokk searches for their tracks. If tracks are found, the bugbears hunt the PCs all night (8 hours). If they don't find the PCs before dawn, the bugbears return to the tower and wait in ambush there. No bugbear leaves the lair without Wurzokk's permission after the band is aware of the party's presence, since their leader wants to face dangerous intruders with his entire force of warriors at hand. The male bugbears, including Wurzokk, are EL 10 if met in a single group. See "The Tower Co-ownership" sidebar for Wurzokk's statistics and area 19 for those of his warriors.

When attacking the PCs by night, the bugbears surround the party's camp, take one-half cover (+4 AC, +2 cover bonus to Reflex saves), and shoot poisoned arrows to weaken their enemies. As long as they have ammunition, they join melee only if forced by the PCs. If two of them are killed, or if their arrows run out, the bugbears retreat. Keep track of bugbear losses, reducing the number in area 19 accordingly.

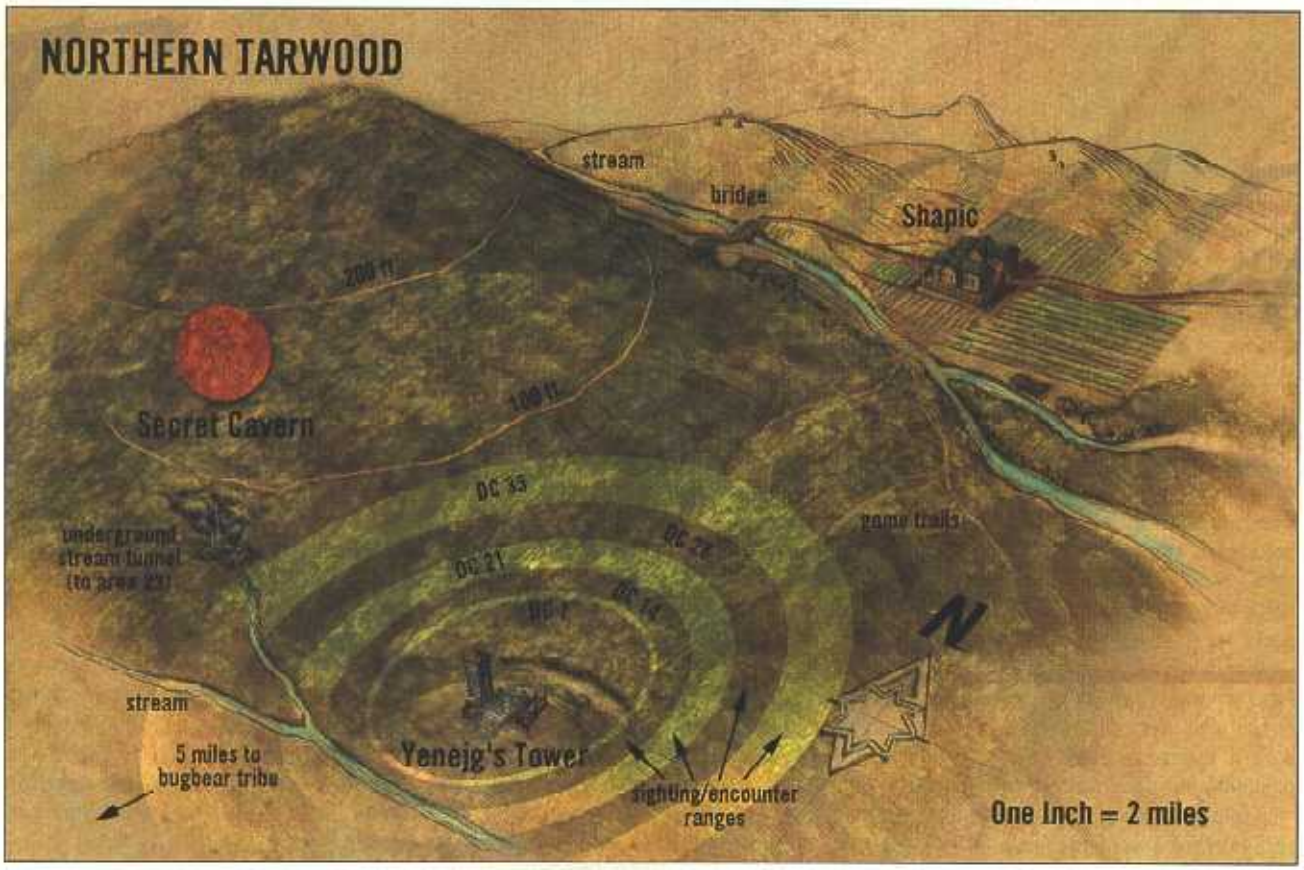
The PCs can question a captured bugbear only if they speak Goblin. The creatures fear their leader's cruelty above all else (see encounter 11 in the "Forest Random Encounters" table), and provide information only if persuaded with spells such as *charm person* or *suggestion*.

Yenejg's Tower & Vicinity

Yenejg's house in Tarwood was built with mundane materials but enhanced with magic. Therefore, after seven decades of near abandonment, much of it has fallen apart. The five-story tower was more than 50 feet tall, but an earthquake brought down the uppermost two floors thirty years ago, reducing the height to just 30 feet. When the heroes reach this location, refer to the Yenejg's Tower Complex map.

Gravel Field. Assume that the PCs arrive at the gravel field north of the tower. Read or paraphrase the following:

> You find a barely recognizable gravel field surrounded by a low stone wall. Beyond a rotted wooden gate on your left, the remains of a small stable and a well are still visible under the



growing grass and vines. Before you, a ramp of stone steps leads up a low, rocky slope to a higher courtyard. There, a truncated tower topped by a makeshift roof stands beside two smaller, ruined buildings.

The bed of gravel is almost completely hidden by the grass, and the dry wall around it is encrusted with moss. The wooden stable has fallen down entirely.

Creatures (EL 3): Five stirges have made their lair among the rotten timbers of the ruined stable. They attack only if the PC search inside the fallen building.

Stirges (5): hp 5 each; *Monster Manual* 173.

Tactics: The stirges are drowsing when the PCs arrive, hidden out of sight in nooks and crannies in the old stable. They become aware of the party's presence 1 round after the PCs enter the building. The stirges each attack the closest target.

FOREST ENCOUNTERS

Results 1–4 in the table occur no more than two times; the remaining encounters can happen only once (roll again if necessary). The chance of detecting randomly encountered traps is given as a Spot check (with a high DC) instead of the usual Search check, since it is unlikely that the PCs proceed slowly enough in the wilderness to use their Search skill effectively. Most encounters in the table feature bugbears and their snares. These humanoids are members of the small group dwelling under Yenejg's tower. Bugbears killed in a random encounter should be marked off from the total residents of area 19 in the bugbear lair.

Roll 1d8:

1 Bugbear Sniper (EL 2): A lone bugbear on a tree is quietly watching for intruders or game. He sits on a crude, 20-foot-high platform hidden by a net interwoven with rags and leaves (+4 circumstance bonus to Hide checks, 50% concealment) and is armed with a longbow. You, the DM, should make the appropriate Spot and Hide checks (with a +2 bonus to the bugbear's Spot check for his carefully chosen position) to determine whether the sniper can shoot the PCs and vice versa from an initial distance of 150 feet. If the heroes locate the bugbear and attack, the creature sounds a hornlike metal trumpet to warn his brethren, climbs down the tree and flees to Yenejg's tower. The sniper is one of the residents of area 19 in the bugbear lair.

Bugbear: hp 15; see *Monster Manual* 27. The bugbear wields a longbow instead of a javelin, and he carries 15 arrows tipped with Blistermusk poison.

2 Barbed Net Trap (EL 2): A PC steps on a net laid over a depression in the ground and hidden with leaves and dirt. When this happens, the net flies up, pulled by a bent tree. If the victim fails a Reflex save (DC 20), he or she is captured by the net and suspended 5 feet above the ground. A caught PC is grappled and must cut the net with a slashing weapon to escape. The net is riddled with metal barbs poisoned with Blistermusk, which wound the victim when the trap springs, exposing the character to the poison. These traps are usually set within hearing range of a sniper's post (see encounter 1 above). Give a nearby sniper a Listen check (DC 15). A sniper who hears intruders out of his sight immediately sounds his trumpet to raise the alarm.

Barbed Net: CR 2; +5 melee (see note); Reflex saving throw (DC 20) negates; Spot (DC 18); Disable Device (DC 15). *Note:* Characters in 5-ft. square are grappled and poisoned (Blistermusk poison, DC 10, initial 0, secondary 1d3 Dex plus 1d3 Con) by the net (Str 18) if they fail the Reflex save (DC 20).

3 Spiked Pit Trap (EL 3): The lead PC stumbles into a concealed 10-foot-deep pit bristling with wooden stakes. The sharp tips are smeared with the foul Blistermusk; the poison, however, is somewhat absorbed and made less effective by the wood (DC 13 instead of 15). The noise of the trap might warn a bugbear sniper (see encounter 2 above).

Spiked Pit Trap (10 ft. deep): CR 3; 1d6 points of falling damage, +10 melee (1d3 stake attacks for 1d4 points of damage and Blistermusk poison—DC 10, initial 0, secondary 1d3 Dex plus 1d3 Con—per successful hit); Reflex save (DC 20) negates; Spot (DC 20); Disable Device (DC 20).

4 Staked Pendulum Trap (EL 2): The lead PC steps over a trip wire, releasing a pendulum hung on the top of a tall tree. The head of the pendulum is a 4-foot-tall and 1-foot-wide trunk segment covered with sharpened stakes. Once more, the bugbears have poisoned the tips (the DC of the poison save here is also reduced to 13). As with the other traps, check for a nearby sniper's awareness.

Spiked Pendulum Trap: CR 2; +5 ranged (2d6 and Blistermusk poison, DC 10, initial 0, secondary 1d3 Dex plus 1d3 Con); Spot (DC 23); Disable Device (23).

5 Bugbear Hunters (EL 5): The PCs encounter a party of four hunting bugbears at a distance of 50 feet, with a chance of both groups being surprised. Make Spot and Listen checks for the bugbears, opposed by the parties Hide and Move Silently checks respectively (assume the PCs are taking 10 on these checks if they don't state otherwise). Give the PCs the same free checks, opposed by the bugbears' Hide and Move Silently checks (again, assume the bugbears are taking 10). The bugbears try to disengage after loosing one arrow each. If the heroes pursue them for more than 5 minutes without catching them, they stumble into a trap (roll 1d3+1 on this table to determine the type). The hunters are residents of area 19 in the bugbear lair.

Bugbears (4): hp 15; see *Monster Manual* 27. The bugbears wield longbows instead of a javelin, and they each carry 15 arrows tipped with Blistermusk poison.

6 Bugbear Carcass (EL —): The PCs smell the foul odor of a rotting corpse. If they follow the stench, they find the body of a dead bugbear. The corpse is prone, naked, and bears a terrible wound on the skull. The bugbear was slain by Wurzokk, his boss, for disobeying a direct order about a week ago; his carcass was stripped and left to rot as an example to the rest of the tribe. A *speak with dead* spell reveals only how and why the bugbear was killed (assuming the caster speaks Goblin).

7 Wild Deer (EL —): A herd of wild deer passes by. The heroes can notice of them with a Spot or Listen check (DC 10).

8 Badger (EL —): The heroes disturb a badger resting under a shrub. The animal scuttles away unless the PCs use a *speak with animals* spell. The badger is laconic, but if the speaker hands over something edible and tasty, it stands on its hind legs, mimics a bugbear, sniffs around, and gestures with its head in the direction of the tower.

Development: A successful Search check (DC 10) anywhere in the tower grounds is likely to reveal bugbear footprints that mostly lead to the vicinity of their lair's entrance (area 15).

Well. The well at the east end of the gravel field is almost intact. A winch system, rusted beyond repair, once allowed a person to easily pull a heavy, full bucket of water from below.

Creatures (EL 5): If the bugbears detect the party's presence, they set up a net trap near the well, carefully hiding it under the gravel. (See **Trap** below for details.) Four males wait for the PCs in a rough circle around the trap, spread over a 50-foot radius (the circled area shown on the "Yenejg's Tower & Vicinity" map) beneath camouflaged netting. PCs who make a successful opposed Spot check (opposed by the bugbears' Hide check) notice an odd shrub with pointed, furry ears.

Trap (EL 2): This barbed net is hidden beneath the gravel near the well. See the "Forest Encounters" sidebar for details.

Bugbears (4): hp 15; see *Monster Manual* 27. In addition to their morningstars, these bugbears each carry three javelins tipped with Blistermusk poison. They wear crudely wrought breastplates (+3 AC), giving them AC 18.

Tactics: The bugbears prefer to wait for the trap to spring but might also take advantage of any other distraction, such as a PC searching around the well or fighting the stirges.

The bugbear ambushers throw javelins until the arrival of their brethren (see **Development** below). Once all the bugbears are present, they charge into melee. Wurzokk is virtually indistinguishable from his warriors in this battle, although a PC looking for a leader among the bugbears can notice Wurzokk's sheared-off ear with a successful Spot check (DC 25).

Development: Hearing sounds of battle at the ambush site, the bugbears inside the lair rush to join the fray. (It takes 3 rounds for them to arrive at the ambush zone.) If the PCs approach the lair without traversing the ambush zone, they are probably seen by the sentinel before the entrance (area 15). In this case, the bugbears inside the lair make a sortie, and those in the ambush zone leave their position to flank the party. All of the male bugbears together with Wurzokk are EL 10. See "The Tower Co-ownership" sidebar for Wurzokk's statistics and area 19 for those of his warriors.

As Wurzokk and his warriors fight the heroes, the female bugbears go to area 16 and wait for the outcome of the battle. They are ready to escape with most of the band's treasure and provisions. If the females are trapped by the adventurers inside the lair, they beg for mercy and offer their belongings in exchange for their lives. If the PCs refuse, they fight to the death with the handaxes they use to harvest firewood.

The bugbear warriors flee when reduced to six or fewer (four if Wurzokk is still alive). Running away, they sound their trumpets to warn the females. Escaping warriors and females flee across the stream and hurry to get help from their tribe. You must decide whether the surviving bugbears come back with reinforcements to reclaim their lair in the following days.

Paved Courtyard. Thanks to its solid foundation, the courtyard pavement is well preserved, although slightly overgrown. The paved surface is dotted by drain holes that double as small skylights for the cellar below (area 11). A tottering, rusty grate closes each 6-inch by 6-inch hole. The two minor buildings—a shed and a warehouse—are badly damaged, with roofs and fixtures almost completely destroyed.

Creature (EL 6): When the PCs walk through the courtyard, Gleir, if not warned earlier by very loud noises (such as a battle with the bugbears), must make a Listen check (DC 5 unless the PCs are attempting to be quiet) to hear them from her lair (area 14). Once she's aware of intruders walking on the courtyard above, the lamia approaches them in a deceitful fashion. Read or paraphrase the following:

> The long tree branches that hang over the courtyard weave a quivering grid of soft shadows on the paved surface, overlapping the irregular pattern of the flagstones. As the wind dies, you hear the feeble voice of a young woman: "Is there anybody out there? Oh, please, for Ehlonna's sake, help me!" The source of the sound, however, remains unseen.

Any PC who makes a successful Spot check (DC 10) sees the delicate hands of a woman (Gleir) groping out of one of the drain holes. The woman begs for help until the PCs approach the grating. If questioned, the lamia pretends to be forgetful and confused (much like Corlag, if the PCs have interrogated him). She claims to be the captive of an evil wizard in an abandoned cellar. The PCs can detect her insincerity with a successful Sense Motive check (opposed by Gleir's Bluff check). If the PCs do not try to help the woman within a few rounds, the lamia gives up the attempt and disappears from sight. Otherwise, approaching PCs eventually see Gleir under the grating; in this situation, however, making out the monstrous features of the lamia is next to impossible without magical aid (such as *arcane eye*). To reach the grating from the floor of the cellar beneath, Gleir is standing on the hind legs of her leonine body. PCs who do not come very close to the drain outlet are able to see only the lamia's feminine, attractive features.

Gleir's statistics are listed in "The Tower Co-ownership" sidebar.

Tactics: Gleir tries to touch any PC who attempts to remove the grating or get a better look at her. Depending on the situation, the lamia might cast *charm person* on a suspicious onlooker to lure her into arm's reach.

If a PC removes the grate with a successful Strength check (DC 7), Gleir might use her *suggestion* power to make the rescuer thrust her head into the drain hole to check if the "girl" is all right. A PC who does so is considered a helpless defender for a full round (with all the tragic consequences). When her true nature is discovered, or if the PCs ignore her, the lamia retreats to area 14 and prepares to fight them in the dungeon.

Development: Peering down any of the drain holes with a light source, the heroes can see a small portion of the cellar beneath (area 11). A Small PC can squeeze inside a drain hole quite easily; Medium-size heroes require an Escape Artist check (DC 17) to wriggle through.

Ruined Structures. The ruined warehouse is unremarkable; its roof has almost completely collapsed, and vegetation grows all over the floor. Nothing of value can be found here. The shed is in the same condition, and only an old stone oven stands out clearly from the rubble against what once was the east wall. Near the oven, which hasn't been used for years, the PC can find the fresh carcass of a young deer, brutally torn to pieces by some beast. A Search check (DC 10) reveals a recent, bloody handprint on the nearby broken wall: It looks human, but traces of webbing can be seen between the fingers. The hand-

print belongs to Toadstool, the half-fiend caretaker of Yenejg's tower.

Approaching the Tower

When the PCs approach the tower from the courtyard, read or paraphrase the following:

> The truncated tower looks firm in spite of the damage caused by the collapse of its upper stories. The top of the tower is uneven and ruined, but a makeshift roof has been rebuilt over it. Part of the rubble around the base of the tower has been cleared to leave a free passage to the entrance, where an 8-foot-tall door surmounts three stone steps. The doorframe's apex is adorned with a life-size stone mask of a gaping wolf. The door is in excellent shape, its wood painted deep black and its brass bands polished and oiled. In the middle of the door, a ring-shaped knocker is fixed over a brass plate with a shut peephole. The brass hinges and keyhole look shiny and perfectly functional. A dried millet broom leans against the door's left jamb.

Circling the tower, PCs can see two identical windows, one on the second story and one on the third, sharing the same style of closed wooden shutters reinforced with brass.

The 8-foot-tall entrance door and 3-foot-tall windows are locked. A successful Climb check is required to reach the windows (at 15 and 25 feet above ground respectively). A PC who puts an ear to the door or a window for at least 2 minutes (taking 20) might hear someone's intermittent snoring inside the tower (Listen, DC 27 from the entrance door and the third-story window, or DC 22 from the second-story window).

Locked, Reinforced Door and Windows: 2 in. thick; Hardness 8; hp 25; Break (DC 24); Open Lock (DC 28).

Toadstool, the monstrous caretaker, maintains and repairs the tower as best he can. The real name of this unnaturally long-lived half-fiend is unknown even by himself, and he has been the wizard's servant for as long as he can remember. Now, seven decades after the death of his master, he still dwells inside the tower, coming out only to obtain food and water. Beside the occasional eating and sweeping, Toad-stool lazes about or sleeps uneasily on his wooden pallet in area 2, worried about the return of his strict master to such a dilapidated property.

Whatever hour the PCs arrive, Toadstool is sleeping on the second floor, digesting a large meal of raw deer meat. However, the half-fiend has excellent hearing and awakens if he hears the PCs moving about. Toadstool, now obliged to share the tower with the lamia and bugbears, is somewhat used to noise outside and keeps the windows and door closed for this reason. The caretaker fears and dislikes his neighbors and prefers to avoid contact with them whenever possible. For Toadstool's stats, see "The Tower Co-ownership" sidebar.

Tactics: If a PC uses the knocker, Toadstool awakens immediately and rushes to greet the newcomer. After a minute, the peephole in the middle of the door opens and the heroes hear a raspy voice ask, "Who's there?" The lonely Toadstool is eager to meet humans, whom he considers tastier than the usual deer by far, and looks at the lead PC with a hungry glare. To notice his inhuman eye through the peephole, the character directly in front of it must succeed at a Spot check (DC 25). Toadstool asks for the visitor's identity but states immediately that only his master can enter. The half-fiend is not very bright, and a male PC could make him believe that he is Yenejg Togan. To do this, the PC must show the wizard's medallion and make a successful Bluff check. Toadstool can make an opposed Sense Motive check to discern the truth. Give him a +5 bonus if he can clearly see the features of the PC making the claim. A hood or large hat coupled with a successful Disguise check (DC 10) makes the ruse convincing enough to fool Toadstool through the peephole.

PCs might attempt other ruses to win entry into the tower. For instance, a PC might claim to be Yenejg's apprentice. The dim half-fiend recalls no apprentice but isn't likely to turn away anyone who claims to be an important follower of his master. Such a ploy requires a Bluff check, although feel free to apply a bonus to the PC's roll for excellent roleplaying.

Trap (EL 2): The wolf mask above the doorframe conceals a brass conduit that runs inside the sculpture and is connected to a dispenser of magical vapor in area 1. If the PCs try to force the door while Toadstool is aware of them, the half-fiend pulls a ring inside the tower that causes a small cone of frost to belch forth from the mask's mouth. The effect is similar to a winter wolf's breath weapon, and anyone standing within 5

feet of the door is struck by it. The ammunition for the trap is a quart of normal water, which is turned into icy vapor by a tiny alchemical apparatus.

Cone of Frost: CR 2; cone of frost (4d6 points of cold damage); Reflex save halves damage (DC 16); Search (DC 29); Disable Device (DC 29).

Toadstool needs a full-round action to reload the apparatus from a nearby water bottle (see area 1), and he tries to activate the trap as many times as he can before the PCs break through the door. The broomstick leaning on the doorjamb is just wood and dry millet, but a resourceful PC aware of the danger overhead could use the stick to plug the conduit in the wolf's head, thereby preventing further blasts from the mask.

Other Ways In

Exploring the tower complex and vicinity, the PCs might find several ways to reach the underground areas below: the outdoor passage leading from the tower cellar (area 5), the stone stairway to the dungeon (area 6), and the entrance to the bugbear caves (area 15). Refer to both the "Yenejg's Tower & Vicinity" and "Yenejg's Tower Dungeon" maps to check the position of these access points.

• To area 5: This wooden trapdoor is hidden under a thin layer of fallen leaves (Search, DC 10, elves and half-elves have an automatic chance of noticing it if they pass within 10 feet). It shows signs of maintenance and recent use. The trapdoor is locked (see area 4 for trapdoor statistics).

• To area 6: A flight of stone steps leads down to the tower dungeon. A wooden door at the bottom of the stairway has been smashed to pieces by a barrage of morningstar blows.

• To area 15: The mouth of the bugbear cave—a 5-foot-tall, dank passage—is hidden by camouflage nets and foliage. It is clearly visible from 20 feet, or from 40 feet with a successful Spot check (DC 15).

Yenejg's Tower (Areas 1–5)

The remaining floors of the truncated tower, in spite of the heavy damage sustained by the earthquake, run no risk of collapsing unless highly destructive spells are used on the walls. The tower was built to last, and it has survived fairly well over the years. The masonry walls are bare outside and plastered inside. The ceilings and floors (rooms are usually 10 feet high) are made of wood.

1. Tower, Ground Floor.

The ground floor of the tower is dark and almost empty, even though the plaster and ceiling timber are in good condition. A blue ceramic stove occupies the west corner, with a large lead pipe going up through a hole in the ceiling. A closed wooden cupboard occupies part of the south wall. Near the door, a wooden lever juts from a brass box fixed on the wall at a height of 2 feet. A brass tube from the box runs upward and disappears in the wall at the top of the door. A full, gallon-sized glass bottle of water rests on the floor near the box. A stairway along the north wall leads up to the first floor. A wooden trapdoor is set into the floor near the west wall.

The cupboard holds a rusty lantern, a pair of stiffened leather gaiters, and a can of hardened grease.

The brass box, sealed shut, radiates Transmutation magic when a *detect magic* spell is cast. It contains the magical apparatus for the cone of frost trap (described above): an elaborate yet small alchemical alembic. Affixed to the box is a small funnel used to load the apparatus with water. It's impossible to tear the box away from the wall without breaking the delicate alembic inside. The water in the bottle is the trap's "ammunition" (sufficient for four uses).

The wooden stairway goes up to area 2. The trapdoor on the floor, unlocked and easily opened, leads down to area 4.

Creature (EL 7): If the PCs break into the tower, Toadstool runs up to the first floor and turns to fight on the top of the stairs, where only one opponent can engage him in melee (suffering the disadvantage of lower ground). The fiendish caretaker does not flee from this point, fighting to the death to defend his home. See "The Tower Co-ownership" sidebar for Toadstool's statistics.

2. Tower, First Floor.

This floor of the tower is furnished as a humble bedroom. A crude wooden bed rests on the northeast corner, covered

by a mat and a yellowed sheet. A small chair stands nearby with a threadbare, gray wool cloak carefully folded upon it. A ceramic pot and a wooden bucket sit along the east wall. The window is closed, and only the feeble light of a clay oil lamp, held by an iron sconce over the bed, illuminates the room. The lead pipe coming from the stove downstairs runs from floor to ceiling in the northwest corner. A wooden stairway leads to the second story.

Since the collapse of his quarters in the warehouse outside, this has become Toadstool's bedroom.

The wooden stairway leads up to area 3.

Treasure: A small niche, hidden behind the bucket and closed by a stone block (Search, DC 21), contains Toadstool's savings: 38 gp and 23 pp in an earthenware moneybox.

3. Tower, Second Floor.

This room doesn't have a flat ceiling but is capped by an oblique, makeshift structure of wooden beams and boards that holds up many uneven rows of salvaged tiles. Dozens of wooden boards of various sizes and shapes are chaotically scattered on the floor and against the walls. The boards are painted with grotesque, disturbing, black-and-red images of torture and death. The heating pipe coming from below passes through the roof structure, presumably leading outside. On the floor are two segments of a 20-foot-long, collapsible ladder, a dozen roof tiles, and a wicker basket full of tools. A whetstone rests over the sill of the window in the south wall.

After the collapse of the upper part of the tower, Toadstool slowly repaired the roof to the best of his ability. He also began to paint obsessively, filling tablets, planks, and pieces of salvaged wood with abstract images of his horrible past. The paintings are eerie but worthless.

The basket on the floor contains a hammer, a saw, a steel punch, and 50 feet of hemp rope.

4. Tower, Basement.

The tower's basement is a dark and musty storeroom. A passage to the east has been walled up with stone blocks. The only furniture in the room is wooden shelving on the south wall, which is crammed full of old tools and miscellaneous junk. Three green glass demijohns are lined up against the north wall.

Toadstool walled up the east passage after the arrival of the bugbears. It's a weak structure; up to three characters can bring it down (Break DC 27) or work for 6 hours to demolish it with the tools stored in the room (see below).

A secret door in the northwest corner leads to area 5. The rotating stone panel runs smoothly, but some strength is needed to spin it.

Secret Stone Door: 3 in. thick; Hardness 8; hp 45; Break (DC 30); Strength check to open (DC 11).

The three demijohns near the north wall contain respectively flammable oil, turpentine, and vinegar.

Treasure: Among the discarded junk and ordinary maintenance items stored in the shelving, the PCs can find the following useful or valuable items:

- A crate of 1-foot-long, rusty steel pitons
- 30 torches
- 200 wax candles
- A shovel, a sledgehammer, and a wood axe
- A jar of black, greasy paint (which must be melted before use) and a wide decorator's brush
- An unlocked wooden box containing 240 sp
- A basket full of crumbling soap bars
- Three clay flagons containing a *potion of darkvision*, a *potion of levitate*, and a *potion of hiding* respectively.

5. Secret Tunnel.

This tunnel, dug hastily in the rocky ground under the tower complex, is roughly hewn and encrusted by moss. Sturdy wooden timbers support the tunnel ceiling.

The tunnel connects the secret door in the tower basement to a trapdoor used by Toadstool for his escapades in the forest.

Locked Wooden Trapdoor: 2 in. thick; Hardness 5; hp 10; Break (DC 16); Open Lock (DC 24).

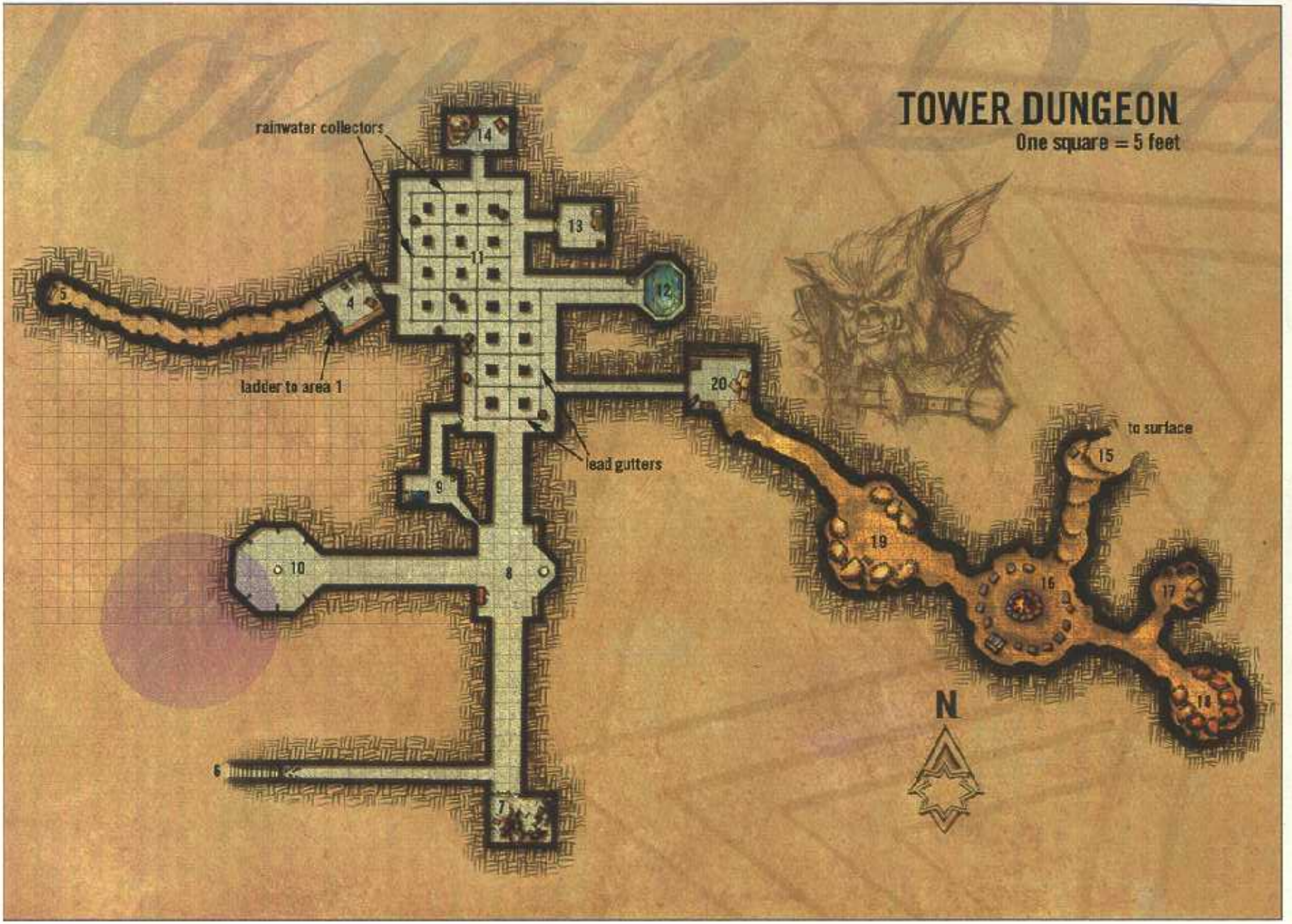
Tower Dungeon (Areas 6–14)

This part of the complex is made of limestone masonry walls, with arched ceilings averaging 10 feet high. Many iron candlestick holders are fixed to the walls at intervals of 20–30 feet. The holders are all empty, but their large number suggests that the place could be illuminated for ritual purposes.

6. Stairway.

The stone structure of a 15-foot-long, steep stairway emerges from the foliage on the forest floor, leading down into a dark brick-and-mortar tunnel. A wooden door at the bottom of the steps has been smashed open.

This stairway is used by Gleir and Jainos Tyskie (when the latter does not cast *dimension door*) to enter the dungeon. A wooden door at the base has been smashed by the bugbears.


TOWER DUNGEON
One square = 5 feet
rainwater collectors
ladder to area 1
lead gutters
to surface
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A Wilderness Lore check (DC 20) with the Track feat allows a PC to spot the following tracks: a mountain lion's paws (Gleir), a human male's boots (Jainos Tyskie), and a biped with clawed feet (the ghast in area 7). A PC stopping to make a Listen check (DC 15) in the corridor downstairs hears gnawing sounds somewhere ahead and smells the trace of a horrible stench. A familiar or animal companion with the scent ability detects the stench automatically and recoils in disgust.

7. Guardroom.

The green curtain that covered the 10-feet-wide entrance to this room has been torn to shreds. In the space beyond, near a toppled table and several broken chairs, the mummified carcasses of four fallen warriors lie on the floor in various unseemly positions. The dead humans wear rusty scale mail and are armed with longswords, the latter still sheathed in the scabbards. The corpses are somewhat well preserved but are beaten and lacerated by powerful blows.

A successful Intelligence check (DC 10) upon examining the bodies reveals that the warriors, who died in a fight without drawing their weapons, were already embalmed as animated zombies before being "killed" again (by the bugbears). A successful Search check (DC 12) reveals that one of the corpses has been gnawed on recently. All the armor and weapons on the corpses are rusted beyond repair. (All valuables have been taken by the bugbears.)

Creature (EL 4): When the PCs enter the room, they are ambushed by a particularly formidable ghast that crept inside the dungeon and is munching on one of the corpses. The monster is hiding in the room; give the lead PC who is cautious a free Spot check (opposed by the ghast's Hide check) to detect it. A party that benefits from the scent ability of an animal is automatically aware of the ghast's presence.

Ghast: CR 4; Medium-size Undead; HD 6d12; hp 29; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 16 (+2 Dex, +4 natural); Atk +5 melee (1d8+1 and paralysis, bite) and +2 melee (1d4+1 [x2] and paralysis, 2 claws); SA stench, paralysis, create spawn; SQ undead (see *Monster Manual*, page 6); AL N; SV Fort +2, Ref +4, Will +7; Str 13, Dex 15, Con —, Int 13, Wis 14, Cha 16.

Skills: Climb +6, Escape Artist +8, Hide +10, Intuit Direction +3, Jump +6, Listen +8, Move Silently +9, Search +6, Spot +8. *Feats:* Multiattack, Weapon Finesse (bite).

SA—Stench (Ex): Those within 10 feet of a ghast must succeed at a Fortitude save (DC 15) or be racked with nausea, suffering a -2 morale penalty to all attacks, saves, and skill checks for 1d6+4 minutes.

SA—Paralysis (Ex): Those hit by a ghast's bite or claw attack must succeed at a Fortitude save (DC 15) or be paralyzed for 1d6+4 minutes. Even elves are vulnerable to this paralysis.

SQ—Create Spawn: If not devoured, the body of a ghast's victim rises as a ghoul in 1d4 days. Casting *bless* on a body before the end of that time averts the transformation.

Tactics: If it hears the party coming, the ghast stops eating and crouches behind a chair in the northeast corner of the room, ready to spring on the first PC who walks in. The ghast is unusually strong, but it tries to run past the PCs and escape outside as soon as it realizes the numerical superiority of its opponents.

8. Vestibule.

This large, rectangular room overlaps a T-junction among three corridors and has 10-foot-wide passages exiting to the south, west, and north. A large, 15-foot-wide polygonal niche was carved in the middle of the east wall. Flanking the niche are two wooden benches that stretch along the east wall. A round table of white marble, carved in the likeness of a squatting demon, stands in the center of the niche. The table surface is empty. A badly damaged wardrobe occupies the southwest corner.

Yenejg's cultists gathered in this room to prepare for their awful rites. Before each ceremony, they laid tributes to their master on the marble table. The wardrobe, badly damaged by careless bugbear plunderers, contains the ragged and dusty remains of several green cloaks.

A successful Search check (DC 15) in the northwest part of the room reveals a peephole in the corner of the room about 5 feet above the floor. The peephole is a slit half an inch tall, closed on the other side by a small stone wedge. If Jainos Tyskie heard the party approaching, the peephole is open, and the sorcerer spies on the heroes from the other side.

9. Secret Room.

This small room, dimly illuminated by an oil lamp, is warm and dry. The lamp rests on a stool in the northeast corner. The only other objects inside the room are a bedroll and a rucksack. A diagonal passage to the southwest lead to an observation point behind a peephole.

Yenejg used this small chamber to spy on his guests through a peephole in the southeast corner. Jainos Tyskie took up residence in this room after discovering the secret door in area 11 (see below). Once inside, he used an *arcane lock* spell to seal the stone door and secure the place. The room is connected to the secret door in area 11 by a short corridor.

In the room, an open bedroll and a big rucksack full of typical adventurer's supplies (mostly food, drink, and lamp oil) lie near the south wall. The only piece of original furniture is an old stool in the northeast corner, where the sorcerer keeps a brass lamp lit at all times. Jainos found the lamp inside the room and soon discovered its magical properties. The lamp's flame does not consume oxygen, and its 15-foot radius of light provides protection against the elements as a *Leomund's tiny hut* spell cast by a 5th-level wizard (without the creation of the spell's opaque sphere).

Creature (EL 8): In the past few days, Jainos has been searching the teleportation room (area 10) inch by inch, looking for clues and secret mechanisms, but to no avail. He has concluded that Yenejg's medallion is absolutely necessary to pass through, especially since he has no way of determining the location of the chamber on the other side, preventing him from going there directly via *dimension door*.

After the capture of Corlag, Jainos told Gleir that the half-elf was only the first of a bunch of potential victims coming to Yenejg's tower in the near future. He explained this theory by telling her that many adventurers had recently learned of a great treasure buried deep under the evil wizard's dungeon. Jainos asked the lamia to destroy any other competitors that

arrived in the next few days. For her help, the sorcerer offered Gleir half of the great treasure he expected to find. The lamia accepted; luckily for Jainos, Gleir likes the sorcerer and is willing to give him a chance.

For Jainos Tyskie's statistics, see "The Tower Co-ownership" sidebar.

Tactics: The sorcerer usually enters and leaves the complex with a *dimension door* spell, thus minimizing his contact with the dungeon's other dwellers. If Jainos hears the PCs coming, he uses the peephole in the secret room to take a look at them when they traverse area 8. If the PCs defeat Gleir, the sorcerer casts *message* on one PC and offers to parley (see the "Dealing with the Sorcerer" sidebar below).

10. Teleportation Room, Dungeon.

This 30-foot-wide room is shaped like an octagon. The bas-relief of an eight-pointed star—a much bigger and more imposing reproduction of the one on Yenejg's medallion—decorates the far wall of the chamber facing the entrance. Six brass levers protrude from the remaining six walls of the octagon. A slim, 3-foot-tall pewter post juts from the exact center of the floor. The vaulted ceiling of the room is covered by a dense network of geometric carvings and mystical inscriptions.

Yenejg used this chamber to *teleport* to his secret cave with minions and captives. To activate it, the PCs must have the wizard's medallion. The entire room radiates Transmutation magic. A successful Spellcraft check (DC 20) on the chamber's carvings hints at their vague similarity to the symbols of a teleportation circle.

The levers protrude from brass plates nailed to the wall 6 feet above the floor. The levers are all down and none of them can be raised without breaking them. Breaking any of the levers (hardness 8; hp 20; Break DC 22) or the pewter post (hardness 8; hp 30; Break DC 26) disables the teleportation room permanently. Simply removing the pewter post, though, does not damage the room's function. The post is inserted in a low depression in the floor and can be lifted easily; it weighs 90 pounds and is worth 50 gp. If this small column is taken away, the room cannot work until the object is put back in place. The smooth, 1-foot-diameter circular top of the post looks like a tiny table surface, in the middle of which the shape of a small disk has been carved. The depression is 1 inch deep and can accommodate Yenejg's medallion perfectly (if the latter is placed with the blank face down). After the medallion is in position, rubbing or spinning it starts a magical effect accompanied by a harmless jolt of energy. Read or paraphrase the following:

The demonic figure inlaid on the surface of the medallion gleams eerily. Then, a magical force rotates the disk slowly and steadily until the small star over the marilith's head aligns with the bigger one carved on the west wall. As soon as the two stars are aligned, the entire ceiling emits a bright light that fills the room with wavy orange shafts of brilliance. With a loud click, the six brass levers on the walls spring up simultaneously. At the same time, menacing electrical discharges flash and crackle around the central post. After a few moments, the discharges cease and the pewter post issues a low hum. The entire event take no more than a few seconds.

Once the medallion is properly aligned and attuned to the room, it can be removed from the pewter post only with a successful *dispel magic* or *break enchantment* spell (DC 24), which "switches off" everything. If no attempt to dispel the effect is made, the orange light lasts for 5 minutes, after which time it fades and the room returns to normal. The levers drop to their initial positions at once. The room can be reactivated by rubbing or spinning the medallion again. When the room deactivates, for whatever reason, the medallion rotates to a random, unaligned position and can be removed from the post without danger.

When the room is activated, pulling down the levers in the proper order *teleports* all of the room's occupants and their gear to area 21 (an identical teleportation chamber). To *teleport* away, the PCs must charge the active room with supplementary energy, lowering the six levers one after the other in the correct order while the orange glow still persists. Whenever a correct lever is lowered, the hum and orange light amplifies.

DEALING WITH THE SORCERER

Jainos is sure that Yenejg's medallion is the only key to the wizard's secret cavern. If the PCs talk with the sorcerer after defeating Gleir, Jainos, seeing no other way to further his quest, tries to make a temporary alliance with the party. Thanks to his long research on the matter, he knows almost everything detailed in the "Adventure Background" and gladly shares this knowledge to impress the PCs. He also tells the heroes of his most important purpose: the recovery of his family's magic ring. If the PCs accuse him of trying to steal the medallion, Jainos defends himself claiming that he made an "honest" attempt to buy the object first.

If the heroes attack or seriously threaten him, Jainos tries to escape with a *dimension door* spell and becomes a hostile NPC. If the PCs consider his proposal, Jainos swears to be their trusted ally during the exploration of Yenejg's secret cavern, asking only that the heroes promise to allow him to take his family's ring as part of his share of treasure. The sorcerer offers to help the PCs even if they are willing to grant him only the ring and nothing else, but he tries to obtain a formal pledge from a lawful PC (a paladin, a cleric, or even a dwarf). Jainos describes the object as a golden band carved in the shape of two clashing fists, with an *arcane mark* inscribed on the inner surface (the same sign described in area 11). Jainos admits that the ring is a magic item (a *ring of counterspells*).

If the heroes recruit Jainos, award half of the sorcerer's XP value to the party. Jainos bravely supports the PCs until he obtains the item he wants, then abandons them at the conclusion of the adventure. Treating the sorcerer kindly could earn the heroes a friend, but Jainos's alignment and his previous involvement with a lamia and a quasit make him an unpredictable acquaintance. Jainos is smart, and he uses his spells intelligently in combat. He might also give the party some useful advice thanks to his Knowledge (the planes) skill.

Any creature touching the post when the room is "active" is struck by the energy accumulated thus far, suffering 2d6 points of electrical damage plus 1d6 points per lever in the "down" position; a successful Reflex save (DC 20) halves the damage. The same thing happens to a PC who lowers a lever out of order. Any discharge "deactivates" the room and causes all the levers to drop down.

The correct sequence can be determined by studying the image of Penfavasta carved on the medallion. (Players should be allowed to study the medallion closely; give them the Yenejg's Medallion handout at the end of the module.) When the room activates, with the star on the demon's head pointing to the bas-relief on the west wall, each one of Penfavasta's arms corresponds to one lever in the room. To find out the correct sequence, the PCs must correctly interpret the right order, from one to six, of the marilith's arms. The right sequence is:

1. **Morningstar.** The single head of the morningstar means "one." The marilith's upper right arm corresponds to the southwest lever.

2. **Greataxe.** The double blade of the greataxe means "two." The marilith's middle left arm corresponds to the north lever.

3. **Trident.** The triple point of the trident means "three." The marilith's lower left arm corresponds to the southeast lever.

4. **Shuriken.** The four-toothed configuration of the shuriken means "four." The marilith's lower left arm corresponds to the northeast lever.

5. **Open Hand.** The empty hand's outstretched fingers mean "five." The marilith's middle right arm corresponds to the south lever.

6. **Hexagonal Prism.** The sides of the prism mean "six." The marilith's upper left arm corresponds to the northwest lever.

If the PC complete the correct sequence, the light inside the room flashes and all living creatures within the room are *teleported* (along with their carried gear) to area 21 with no save. Yenejg's medallion *teleports* with the room occupants.

Ad Hoc XP: Using the teleportation room correctly the first time counts as a CR 5 encounter.

11. Cellar.

It is impossible to catch this enormous cellar with a single glance. The vaulted, 10-foot-tall ceiling is supported by a grid of massive square pillars, and the whole place is lit and ventilated by the same drain holes that dot the surface of the courtyard above. A network of lead gutters set into the stone floor collects rainwater from the holes, bringing it through a passageway on the east wall. Several wine kegs, now empty, are scattered here and there on the floor. The faint traces of old summoning circles and blasphemous inscriptions—partly etched in the stone, partly painted in black and red—can be seen everywhere.

The passage where the gutters converge leads to a cistern (area 12). Yenejg used this huge cellar for most of his early rites and experiments. Among the evident traces of an evil cult's activity—dried bloodstains, charred bones, and torn scrolls—the PCs can find some clues. A Search check (DC 22) among the foul debris reveals the following:

- A crumpled piece of parchment bearing the crude drawing of a demon. A successful Knowledge (the planes) check (DC 10) reveals that the depicted monster is a vrock and gives information about the creature's combat and special abilities. (Players can be permitted to study the description of the vrock in the *Monster Manual*.)
- A magical inscription traced on the wall by Jainos for no special reason. A Spellcraft check (DC 20) identifies it as an *arcane mark*. The six characters are T-Y-S-K-I-E (the sorcerer's family name).
- Evidence of the use of summoning spells *(planar binding)*, recognizable with a Spellcraft check (DC 26), and traces of complex calling diagrams. A PC who successfully identifies the diagrams can make out the names "Penfavasta" and "Typazkar" if she can comprehend Abyssal, and the name "Ramzash" if she comprehends Infernal. (The vrock Typazkar and the kyton Ramzash lurk deeper under Yenejg's tower, in areas 27 and 32 respectively.)

Creature (EL 6): Gleir, the lamia who lives in area 14, confronts the heroes here. (See "The Tower Co-ownership" for her statistics.) When she becomes aware of the party's presence in the dungeon, the lamia creates a figment of herself, using her *major image* power, with a normal girl's legs. Gleir places the image near the passage to the cistern and hides behind the pillars, keeping watch on the cellar's entrance to the south. The lamia hopes to lure the PCs to the cistern, where Yenejg Togan conjured and bound a water elemental.

Tactics: As soon as the PCs enter the cellar, assuming that the lamia sees them and can maneuver her illusory puppet at the right moment, they glimpse a girl peering apprehensively behind the corner of the wall. Immediately after, she runs out of sight down the tunnel to area 12. With this trick, Gleir hopes that the heroes chase the figment to the cistern, where the water elemental quietly waits for intruders. If the PCs follow the figment taking precautions, Gleir increases the dramatic effect of her *major image* with a girl's scream and the sound of running steps splashing in the water. If the PCs draw within range of the water elemental's attack (10 feet from the cistern), the monster immediately attacks them.

At this point, Gleir casts *mirror image* and moves to cut off the party's retreat. The lamia makes good use of her *potion of fire breath* to augment her offensive abilities. Of course, Gleir's plans change if a PC drops inside the cellar from a drain hole near her lair, or if a *cloudkill* from a party's spellcaster pours down through the gratings above her head. A stealthy PC can get near enough to see the lamia and the false image of the girl well before Gleir moves the figment. An invisible PC automatically beats Gleir's Spot skill but must still take care to conceal his footfalls or light source.

While determining the lamia's course of actions, keep in mind Gleir's cunning, intelligence and—above all—her survival instincts. If reduced to fewer than 20 hp, Gleir tries to escape the dungeon via the stairway in area 6, using what is left of her spell-like abilities to distract pursuers.

Development: If you want to present a complex roleplaying situation, you might allow the PCs to parley with Gleir. In this case, it is likely that Jainos Tyskie shows up, too. The development of such an unusual encounter is up to you, but keep in mind that the lamia is thoroughly evil and that no deal with such a cruel monster should produce beneficial results to a party of good-aligned PCs.

If Gleir escapes the dungeon, she heads to the entrance of the bugbear caves (area 15) and tries to strike up an alliance with Wurzokk, the bugbear leader.

12. Cistern.

This room, shaped like an elongated octagon, contains a large cistern fed by rainwater coming from the cellar to the west. The cistern appears filled almost to capacity. A 2-foot-wide stone walkway runs around the perimeter of the room. An empty metal bucket sits near the north wall at the entrance.

Creature (EL 5): Yenejg built the cistern as an indoor water supply and placed a water elemental to guard it against possible poisoning. The cistern is 20 feet deep and almost full. The elemental attacks only if someone comes within 10 feet of the water. Gleir, if alive, takes advantage of the elemental's attack to flank the party. The lamia, however, is very careful to avoid coming within reach of the elemental, as the creature does not recognize her as an ally.

Water Elemental, Large: hp 67; *Monster Manual* 84.

Tactics: The water elemental prefers to fight from the cistern. Any PC standing within 10 feet of the cistern who is struck by the elemental's slam attack must succeed at a Balance check (DC 5 plus damage suffered) or be dragged into the water.

The elemental does not attack until someone comes within 10 feet of the cistern. Once provoked, though, it pursues intruders anywhere in the dungeon for at least 5 rounds. In any case, the elemental cannot go more than 180 feet from the body of water where it was summoned (the cistern) and returns there as soon as it can. If reduced to fewer than 10 hp, the elemental retreats to the bottom of the cistern, hoping to be left alone.

13. Cell.

The door to this small room is ajar and sports a broken lock and a small, shuttered window, presumably to allow those within to look out or those outside to peer in. The room contains a wooden pallet, the remains of a wool blanket, and an empty clay jar.

This small cell, now empty, was used by Yenejg to hold captives. Many crude writings scraped on the wall testify to the presence of many hapless prisoners in the past. If you like, you can put a clue related to the campaign among the otherwise meaningless graffiti.

14. Lamia's Den.

The door to this room is half-open and was visibly forced. The smell of a savage beast permeates the air inside. A pile of straw covered by filthy, poorly tanned deerskins rests in the northwest corner of the room, filling nearly half of the available space. An opened wooden crate in the east part of the room contains a heap of bare humanoid skulls.

Gleir made her lair in this room. The skulls in the crate belong to a dozen humans and humanoids killed by the lamia (no bugbear skulls, though).

Treasure: A Search check (DC 15) reveals a leather sack under Gleir's bed that holds her valuables, mostly stolen from slain victims: two 1-foot-tall silver statuettes of the god Heironeous (worth 10 gp each), a platinum cup (200 gp), a silvered punching dagger (10 gp), the golden hilt of a broken longsword (90 gp), a pouch containing 75 gp, and an arcane scroll with five spells cast at 6th level (*color spray, obscure object, protection from chaos, Tasha's hideous laughter, Tenser's floating disk*). The silvered punching dagger is a gift from Jainos Tyskie to Gleir.

The Bugbear Lair (Areas 15–20)

This natural cavern complex was incomplete at the time of Yenejg's departure and remained an irregular structure of partly natural and partly hewn stone. The bugbears occupied it without making many changes, with the exception of a new tunnel from area 19 to area 20. In the constructed portion of the cavern, the ceiling height varies from 7–9 feet.

15. Entrance.

Beyond the 7-foot-wide mouth of a natural cavern, almost completely covered by camouflage nets made of vegetable fibers, a roughly hewn passage slopes down into darkness. A small niche next to the entrance is furnished with a single stone block that serves as a crude stool.

Camouflage nets cover the entrance, affording total concealment (50% miss chance). The passage beyond slopes down for 30 feet toward the core of the bugbear lair. Any bugbear attacked at home fights fiercely, calling upon the help of his brethren to repel the invaders.

Creature (EL 2): A bugbear sentry watches the entrance from a niche near the entrance, sitting on a block of stone taken from the tower walls. Even with the camouflage nets draped over the cave mouth, small holes allow the sentry to look out in the immediate vicinity. The bugbear sentry, who lives in area 19, wears a crudely fashioned breastplate over his leather armor (treat as studded leather).

Bugbear: hp 15; *Monster Manual* 27. The bugbear carries a wooden signal horn as well as three javelins tipped with Blistermusk poison (DC 15; initial 0, secondary 1d3 Dex plus 1d3 Con).

Tactics: If the sentry spots the PCs and the tribe wasn't already aware of the party's presence, he silently alerts the rest of the bugbears. If the PCs detect the sentry and attack, he blows his signal horn before falling back into the lair.

16. Common Room.

A thin ray of light penetrates this circular, 15-foot-tall cave through a hole in the smoke-blackened ceiling. A fireplace dominates the middle of the floor, raised on a round pedestal of neatly squared stones. A heap of similar blocks, once part of the tower structure, have been used to build a plain throne against the western wall. Thirteen lesser seats, each a single stone, circle the fireplace, where an elaborate system of metal grills and spit supports has been set up. Crude pottery, mostly dirty, is scattered everywhere. The room smells of soot, spices, and rancid meat.

The stone bed of the fireplace is littered with ash, charred wood shards, and fragments of bone. A Spot check (DC 10) reveals a human skull in the mess. Many gnawed animal and human bones, stripped bare of flesh, can be found on the floor. The latest big feast, with Corlag's companions as the main course, was less than a week ago. A half-empty bowl of some

foul-tasting green sauce on the brink of the fireplace is the main source of the spicy scent.

Creatures (EL 4 for Wurzokk): When not resting in area 19, hunting, or working in area 20, Wurzokk sits on the throne, tormenting the female bugbears with orders and rebukes. If the PCs reach this area without alerting the entire tribe, Wurzokk shouts for aid as soon as trouble appears. Any female bugbears present retreat to area 18.

See "The Tower Co-ownership" sidebar for Wurzokk's statistics and information.

17. Pantry.

This small cave contains many clay vases and containers arranged on crude shelves. The smell of spices and rancid meat is very strong here.

The foodstuffs stored here are mostly comprised of heavily spiced deer meat, dried mushrooms, chestnuts, and herbs. A large, corked glass jar holds a gallon of very strong (but otherwise potable) walnut liquor. The room also contains a score of full waterskins. Four 6-foot-long, greasy steel cooking spits lean against the wall opposite the entrance.

18. Females' Dormitory.

This cave is occupied by a half dozen crude beds made of leaves and animal skins. A poorly rendered, 3-foot-tall wooden statue of a bugbear armed with a morningstar stands atop a carved stone near the entrance.

This room is similar to area 19, although smaller with just six beds. A successful Knowledge (religion) check (DC 15) can tell a PC that the statue represents Hruggek, the bugbear god. The wooden statue weighs 15 pounds and could make a nice souvenir, but it is otherwise worthless.

Creatures (EL 3): The six female bugbears—concubines and servants to the males—share this room, leaving the lair only occasionally to bring water from the nearby stream or to idle outdoors.

Female Bugbears (6): hp 11 each; *Monster Manual* 27. Note that these bugbears are unarmored (AC 14) and wield only handaxes (+4 melee, 1d6+2 damage).

Tactics: If the bugbears have prepared an ambush in the tower grounds, the females wait in area 15 for the outcome, ready to escape into the forest if things go awry. The females fight only if cornered and threatened by the PCs.

Development: There are no young in this lair, since all bugbear young are born and raised in the safety of the nearby tribe (located 10 miles southwest of Yenejg's tower).

19. Males' Dormitory.

Eleven beds of straw and animal skins are arranged against the wall of this cave. Hunting trophies and filthy furs cover every wall. The bed in the northernmost part of the room looks bigger and is covered with the pelt of a dire bear.

This is where Wurzokk and the male bugbears sleep. The dire bear pelt on the leader's bed, though overridden by lice, is worth 200 gp if cleaned. A wooden chest, neither locked nor trapped, is hidden under the straw of the largest bed. It contains the **Treasure.**

Creatures (EL varies, see Encounter Level Chart at the end of module): Eleven male bugbears, including Wurzokk, sleep here. The humanoids who are not hunting, keeping watch in the forest, or laying in ambush outside—usually five—are likely to idle in the dormitory or somewhere else in the lair.

Male Bugbears (10): hp 15 each; *Monster Manual* 27. Each male carries a signal horn in addition to his normal gear, wears a crude metal breastplate over his leather armor (treat as studded leather), and carries a longbow and fifteen arrows tipped with Blistermusk poison.

Tactics: If the bugbears are unaware of the PCs presence and haven't set up an ambush in the courtyard, the non-sentry males will be present in this room. If caught by surprise, they fight to the death to allow the females time to escape.

Treasure: Inside the chest, PCs can find three brown-green garnets (120 gp each), two rubies (500 gp each), 410 gp, 730 sp, a clay bottle containing Blistermusk poison oil (twenty-five doses), and plenty of nonmagical hunting and adventuring paraphernalia (mostly taken from Corlag's companions and victims from Shapic). Wurzokk keeps the gems with him if he feels threatened (for instance, if the PCs' presence has been detected). If the females gather in area 15 for an escape pending an unfavorable outcome to the ambush, they take and divide among themselves all the gold in Wurzokk's chest.

20. Armory.

This room serves as an armory. A wooden rack cluttered with weapons and pieces of armor spans the north wall. In the southwest corner are some artisan's tools and a small anvil. A rusty iron door with a small, barred window blocks a passage leading west.

All told, the bugbears have 11 ill-fitting metal breastplates (treat as studded leather armor), 11 morningstars, 11 longbows (some stolen from slain hunters), 8 handaxes, 35 javelins, and 140 arrows. Most of the listed weapons are in the hands of the bugbears at all times, but the males don the crude breastplates only when expecting a big fight. The weapons of Corlag's three ill-fated companions—two short swords and a battleaxe—lie against the south wall. PCs can also spot the remains of two suits of leather armor that were torn to pieces to supply the bugbears with spare material. The tools are used by Wurzokk to produce arrowheads and repair broken or damaged gear.

This room used to be Yenejg's treasury. The iron door in the west wall is completely blocked by rust, and its key was lost decades ago. A small, barred window without a shutter allows characters to peep through to the other side. Once in a while, Wurzokk and Gleir meet on the opposite sides of the door to renew their pact of mutual tolerance. Six months ago, the lamia tried unsuccessfully to *charm* Wurzokk. To placate the bugbear's rage and avoid retaliation from the tribe, Gleir had to surrender the three garnet gems described in area 19.

Rusty Iron Door, Blocked: 2 in. thick; Hardness 9; hp 18; Break (DC 26).

Secret Cavern (Areas 21–25)

Once the PCs have activated and used the teleportation room correctly (see area 10), they arrive in a similar underground

chamber far beneath Yenejg's tower complex (area 21). The place is totally dark and very dank, but the air is fairly fresh, due to many natural aeration ducts.

The secret cavern is situated about four miles northwest of Yenejg's tower complex, beneath a low hill in Tarwood (see the "Northern Tarwood" map). Inside the secret cavern, thanks to stonecunning, a dwarf PC can estimate the depth to be about 200 feet below the surface, but the overall altitude is almost the same of Yenejg's tower. Since many locations in the secret cavern are on different levels, their relative heights in feet have been marked on the "Secret Cavern" map.

The features of areas 21-22 are rather ordinary and identical to those of the locales under Yenejg's tower (areas 6-14). The natural caves found by Yenejg—one huge and two smaller ones (areas 23-25)—are natural limestone structures.

21. Teleportation Room, Secret Cavern.

This octagonal chamber looks identical to the one in the tower dungeon. The corridor to the east, however, obviously leads to a different place, and the air is humid.

This room is exactly as area 10, with the pewter post in the center and the six brass levers on the walls. *Teleported* heroes arrive in the same relative position they departed from, with the chamber "switched off" and inactive. The same holds true for Yenejg's medallion, which materializes atop the pewter post in the middle of the room. At this point, you have two options:

- The pewter post is in place. The PCs can thus activate the room and go back to Yenejg's tower immediately if they want.
- The pewter post is missing. When the PCs arrive in the destination chamber, Yenejg's medallion materializes in mid-air, falling in the empty depression where the base of the pewter post should be with an ominous clang. The PCs should immediately realize that using the room without one of its components is impossible, and that they have a big problem. If only one PC tried to use the teleportation room, consider this option carefully, as the PC would find herself alone in a dangerous situation.

If the pewter post has been removed, it can now be found in area 25. The post was taken away by a group of subterranean adventurers about ten years ago (see below).

When they appear in this chamber via teleportation from area 10, the PCs detect a sudden increase in humidity and hear water dripping and flowing to the east.

22. Fallen Guardian.

This room contains rocky fragments of a shattered statue. A low pedestal sits in the middle of the floor, but it looks like the statue did not fall from it. Rather, the statue shattered near a 10-foot-wide passage that opens in the east wall.

Like the zombie soldiers in area 7, another guardian created by Yenejg Togan was defeated in this chamber well before the arrival of the PCs. In fact, a group of adventurers came to the secret cavern ten years ago, magically digging their way to area 25 from some part of the Underdark. The race of these subterranean heroes or villains is up to you: dark elves, deep dwarves, derro, duergar, or svirfneblin are all possible choices. Close examination of the fragments reveals that the

THE TOWER CO-OWNERSHIP

At the time of the adventure, Yenejg's tower and the dungeon beneath is occupied by three groups that live in separate areas: Toadstool, the fiendish caretaker (areas 1-5). Gleir the lamia (areas 6-14), and the bugbears led by Wurzokk (areas 15-21). In addition, the sorcerer Jainos Tyskie is encamped in area 9. Everyone living in the complex fears and dislikes their respective neighbors. Wurzokk sometimes ponders the idea of killing and robbing the badly outnumbered caretaker and lamia, but he and his warriors have been frightened by the powers of their potential victims, especially the water elemental in area 12 and the cone of frost trap above the tower entrance.

The Caretaker (EL 7): Yenejg Togan found Toadstool, the caretaker, in a dungeon infested by demons: a crossbred child abandoned by a loathsome outsider. The wizard raised the child as his personal servant, teaching him obedience and some basic skills. Toadstool was left by Yenejg to take care of his tower when he moved to town as its new ruler. The half-fiend, who has not seen Yenejg for seven decades, suspects that his master is dead but also thinks that death is not such a sure thing for a powerful wizard. Toadstool, in spite of his ancestry and long service to a master of the arcane arts, is dim-witted and unable to use the typical spell-like abilities of a half-fiend. Toadstool's fiendish features include oversized eyes and ears, webbed hands, a wide mouth filled with sharklike teeth, and an unnaturally pale complexion. He wears simple peasant clothes and a pair of strange pointed shoes. Toadstool has red marks all over his exposed skin, making him seem like the victim of some disease. The stains are actually a lattice of enchanted tattoos, drawn by Yenejg, that give Toadstool additional capabilities (see below). The tattoos radiate Transmutation magic.

Toadstool, Male Half-fiend/Half-human Com7: CR 7; Medium-size Outsider (Evil, Chaotic); HD 7d4+14; hp 29; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 13 (+2 Dex, +1 natural); Atk +7 melee (1d6+3, bite) and +3 [×2] melee (1d4+1, claws); SA fury, big jaws; SQ blink, fiendish resistances, darkvision 60 ft.; AL CE; SV Fort +4, Ref +4, Will +0; Str 17, Dex 15, Con 15, Int 7, Wis 6, Cha 8.

Skills: Climb +9, Craft (carpentry) +2, Craft (painting) +2, Craft (stonemasonry) +3, Jump +8, Listen +8, Tumble +5, Spot +4. *Feats:* Alertness, Blind-Fight, Multiattack, Weapon Focus (bite).

Possessions: Peasant's outfit, utility knife (not used in combat), steel ring with four keys (for all the locks in areas 1-5).

SA—Fury (Su): Thank to his magic tattoos, Toadstool can rage as a 7th-level barbarian. In this state, the half-fiend has 43 hp; AC 11; Fort +6; Will +2; Atk +8 melee (1d8+5, bite) and +5 melee (1d4+2 [×2], claws); Str 21, Con 19. Toadstool has a perfect control over this supernatural ability and can use it just to scare off "nosy parkers."

SA—Big Jaws (Su): When Toadstool rages in combat, his mouth enlarges dramatically, increasing the die type for the half-fiend's bite damage. The bite of a raging Toadstool deals 1d8+5 points of damage.

SQ—Blink (Su): When raging, Toadstool is under the effect of a *blink* spell for the duration of his frenzy (see the *Player's Handbook*, page 180, for details on the *blink* spell).

SQ—Fiendish Resistances (Ex): Toadstool is immune to poison of any kind, and has acid, cold, electricity, and fire resistance 20.

The Bugbear Leader (EL 4): Wurzokk is the leader of a small group of bugbear hunters—a detachment of a much larger tribe living nearby. He is a burly, middle-aged bugbear with very dark fur and the point of an ear neatly slashed off. Besides his combat skills, Wurzokk is a capable artisan among his people. The bugbears have been living in Tarwood for four decades, and the young Wurzokk occupied the cave under Yenejg's tower shortly after the tyrant was slain. After settling the caverns (areas 15-20), Wurzokk and his bugbears explored part of the dungeon beneath the tower (areas 6-14) but were driven out by the water elemental guarding the cistern (area 12). Wurzokk was also frightened by the supernatural fury of Toadstool, whom he avoids carefully. When Gleir arrived, Wurzokk allowed her to lair in the vacant part of the dungeon, hoping that she would leave as soon as possible.

Wurzokk, Male Bugbear Exp3: CR 4; Medium-size Goblinoid (7 ft. tall); HD 3d8+3 (bugbear) plus 3d6+3 (Exp); hp 30; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 16 (+1 Dex, +3 natural, +2 leather) or AC 17 (+1 Dex, +3 natural, +2 leather, +1 crude breastplate); Atk +7 melee (1d8+2, morningstar) or +5 ranged (1d8/crit ×3 and poison, longbow, or 1d6 and poison, javelin); SQ darkvision 60 ft.; AL CE; SV Fort +3, Ref +5, Will +4; Str 16, Dex 13, Con 13, Int 11, Wis 10, Cha 12.

Skills: Alchemy +3, Climb +6, Craft (blacksmithing) +3, Craft (bowmaking) +4, Craft (trapmaking) +5, Hide +5, Listen +6, Move Silently +7, Spot +3, Wilderness Lore +4. *Feats:* Power Attack, Track.

Possessions: Morningstar, longbow (with 15 arrows) or 3 javelins, leather armor, crude breastplate (stored in area **20** but worn during battle), camouflage net (folded or worn), trumpet horn. The tips of Wurzokk's arrows and javelins are dipped in Blistermusk poison (DC 15; initial 0, secondary 1d3 Dex plus 1d3 Con).

The Lamia (EL 6): Gleir, a wandering lamia, took refuge in Tarwood about one year ago. After a long "career" as a slayer of unwary travelers and incautious adventurers in a distant land, Gleir was hunted down by a group of determined heroes who looted and destroyed her lair. The lamia barely escaped with her life, and she decided to move to a place far away to avoid any additional pursuit. Upon her arrival in Tarwood, the lamia settled in a vacant part of the dungeon beneath Yenejg's tower. Exploring her new home, with a figment of herself well ahead as a precaution, Gleir discovered the deadly elemental in area 12. Needless to say, the lamia decided that the cistern was an ideal way to dispatch unwanted intruders, not to mention a fine home security system.

Gleir is an ordinary member of her race. Her humanlike torso is that of a beautiful, savage girl with long, chestnut brown hair and green eyes. Her beastly lower body is that of a mountain lion.

Gleir, Lamia: CR 6; Medium-size Magical Beast; HD 9d10+9; hp 58; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 60 ft.; AC 17 (+2 Dex, +5 natural); Atk +11/+6 melee (1d4, dagger) or +9 melee (1 permanent Wisdom drain, touch); SA spell abilities, wisdom drain; SQ low-light vision, darkvision 60 ft.; AL CE; SV Fort +7, Ref +8, Will +7; Str 10, Dex 15, Con 12, Int 13, Wis 15, Cha 12.

Skills: Bluff +13, Concentration +11, Hide +14. *Feats:* Dodge, Iron Will, Mobility, Weapon Finesse (dagger).

Possessions: Potion of cure light wounds, potion of fire breath, dagger, golden armband (70 gp).

SA—Spell-like Abilities (Sp): Once a day, Gleir can use *charm person, major image, mirror image,* and *suggestion.* These abilities are as the spells cast by a 9th-level sorcerer (save DC 11 + spell level).

SA—Wisdom Drain (Su): By making a successful touch attack, a lamia permanently drains 1 point of Wisdom. Lamias try to use this power early in an encounter to make foes more susceptible to *charm person* and *suggestion.*

The Sorcerer (EL 8): Jainos Tyskie, also known as the merchant Odals Alzota, arrived at Yenejg's tower just one month before Corlag's attack on Kalier Goloda. The sorcerer was able enough to avoid contact with the bugbears, and he simply ignored Toadstool, heading directly for the teleportation room in the dungeon (area 10). When Jainos met Gleir, instead of fighting her, he managed to calm her down with a false promise of victims and treasure. After his deal with the lamia, the sorcerer found a cozy secret room (area 9) and camped there, hoping to stay just long enough to retrieve Yenejg's medallion and activate the teleportation room. Unfortunately for him, Jainos's attempt to steal Yenejg's medallion has failed, as has his search for an alternate route to the secret cavern. Things became more complicated with the arrival of Corlag and the lamia's decision to send him back to kill Kalier to demonstrate her vengeful cunning. Moreover, Gleir is losing her patience, and cohabitation with her is getting more and more uneasy and dangerous for Jainos.

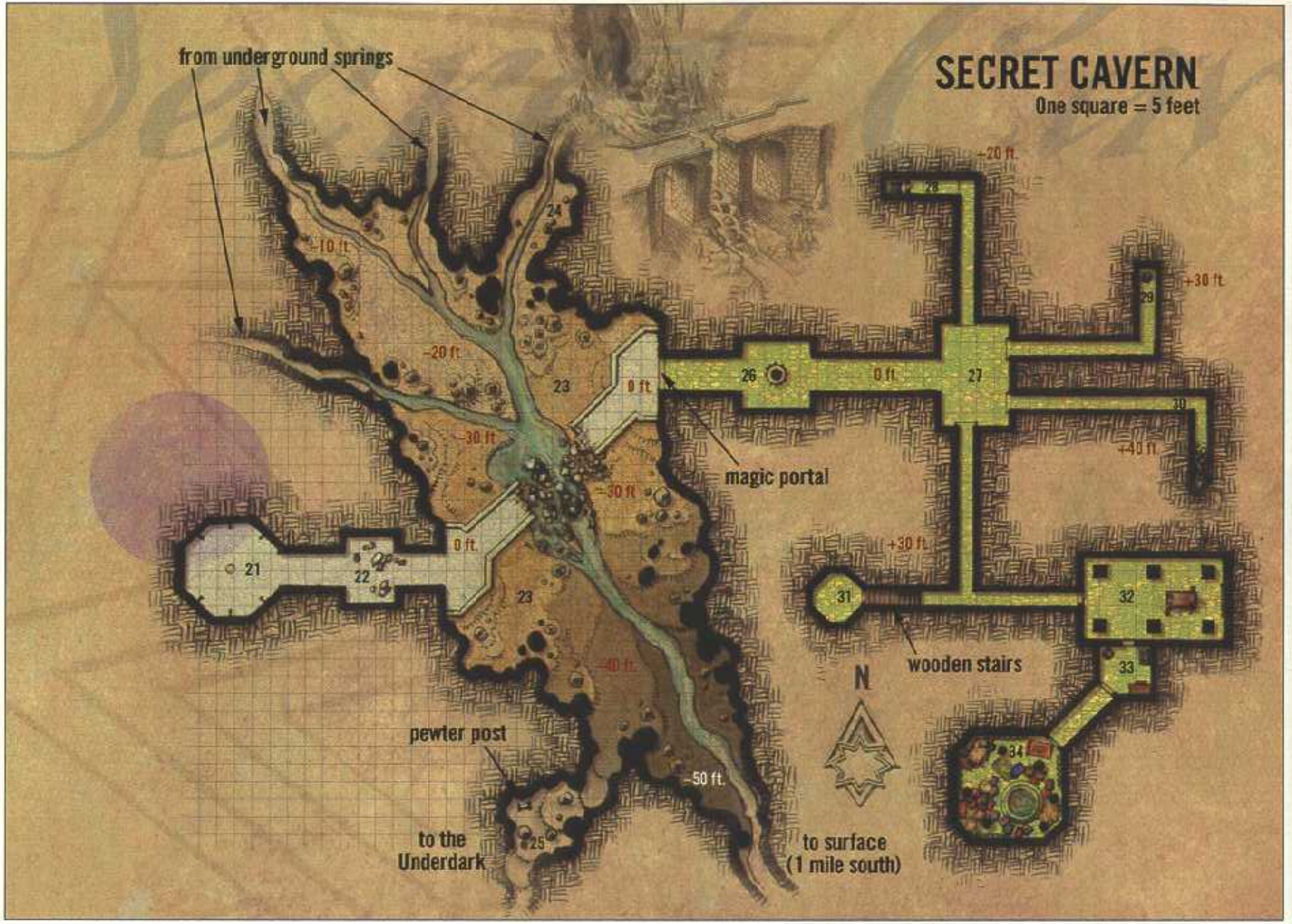
Jainos is a lean human of average height in his early thirties. He has long black hair and sky-blue eyes. As Jainos Tyskie, the sorcerer, he dons dark gray clothing, a *cloak of elvenkind,* a pair of *bracers of armor,* and wears his hair loose on the shoulders. As Odals Alzota, the merchant, he wears rich, colorful clothing and an expensive hat. He is a charming fellow, although he is frustrated by his inability to recover his ancestor's ring; this has cast a dark shadow on his otherwise sparkling personality.

Jainos Tyskie, Male Human Sor8: CR 8; Medium-size Humanoid (5 ft. 10 in. tall); HD 8d4+16; hp 35; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 15 (+1 Dex, *+4 bracers of armor*) or AC 16 (same as above, with Dodge feat); Atk +5 melee (1d4/crit ×3, masterwork punching dagger) or +6 ranged (1d8/crit 19-20, masterwork light crossbow); AL CN; SV Fort +4, Ref +5, Will +6; Str 10, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 13, Wis 11, Cha 16.

Skills: Bluff +6, Concentration +8, Diplomacy +6, Disguise +4, Knowledge (arcana) +6; Knowledge (the planes) +7, Listen +2, Sense Motive +3, Spellcraft +5. *Feats:* Combat Casting, Dodge, Lightning Reflexes, Skill Focus (Knowledge—the planes).

Spells Known (6/7/7/5/3; base save DC = 13 + spell level): 0—*arcane mark, dancing lights, detect magic, disrupt undead, flare, light, ray of frost, read magic;* 1st—*hold portal, hypnotism, message, magic missile, mount;* 2nd—*arcane lock, darkness, levitate;* 3rd—*dispel magic, lightning bolt;* 4th—*dimension door.*

Possessions: Cloak of elvenkind, +4 bracers of armor, wand of shocking grasp (command word "zirphan," 35 charges left), masterwork punching dagger, light crossbow with 10 bolts, traveler's outfit (worn when Jainos is himself), courtier's outfit (worn when Jainos is posing as Odals Alzota), five gems (200 gp each), pouch containing 13 pp and 25 gp.


SECRET CAVERN
One square = 5 feet
from underground springs
-10 ft.
-20 ft.
-30 ft.
-40 ft.
-50 ft.
0 ft.
+20 ft.
+30 ft.
+40 ft.
magic portal
wooden stairs
pewter post
to the Underdark
to surface (1 mile south)
N
21
22
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34

9-foot-tall statue represented a heavily armored warrior armed with spiked gauntlets (a stone golem). A PC with the Track feat, or one succeeding in an Intelligence check (DC 15), can determine that the shattered construct fell on its back toward the pedestal, and that the intruders probably came from the east. A successful Search check (DC 10) allows the PCs to find the remains of masterwork ranged weapons and ammunition. The splinters are but traces of the magic weapons used by the party to destroy the animated statue. The exact nature of the weapons depends on what race of creatures attacked the statue (for example, hand crossbow bolts for drow, barbed javelins for troglodytes, and so on). A character who makes a successful Knowledge check (DC 15) can identify the interlopers' race. The PC gets a +6 competence bonus if she knows Undercommon. This clue can be used to provide a link to a subsequent adventures involving the Underdark, as well as to give the players a ready explanation for the missing pewter post in area 21. (See area 25 for further information.)

23. Limestone Cavern.

The passage ends at a polygonal stone platform that juts into a huge limestone cavern full of wet, shiny columns of rock, toothy stalactites and stalagmites, and albino mushrooms and moss. The cave is crossed diagonally, southwest to northeast, by a three-arched stone bridge whose middle section has collapsed. The bridge connected the southwest platform with a similar one on the far side of the cave, where a circular stone door has been fixed to a masonry wall.

Almost perpendicular to the bridge, a small stream of water crosses the middle of the cave, running south. The stream is fed by three smaller rivulets to the north and disappears through a small fissure at the extreme south end of the cavern. The floor of the cave, located approximately 30 feet below the polygonal platforms, plunges to the south, sloping gradually along the sides. The arched ceiling follows the slope of the floor, maintaining an average height of 50 feet along the course of the stream and hanging about 20 feet above the bridge.

Due to the clear, reflective nature of the moist limestone, a single torch near the center of the bridge can provide sufficient illumination to allow the PCs a decent view of the cave's shape and size.

The central section of the bridge collapsed during the same earthquake that truncated Yenejg's tower. To cross the 20-foot-wide gap in the middle without magical means (such as a *fly* spell), the PCs must make a successful Jump check (DC 20). PCs falling from the bridge take 3d6 points of damage. Alternatively, they can climb down a nearby rocky wall and climb up the one on the other side. The cave walls around these structures are little more than steep slopes, but they are slippery (Climb, DC 10).

Creature (EL 3): When the PCs walk on the floor of the limestone cavern to reach a significant passage or fissure in the cave walls, they have a 1-in-4 chance of encountering a single phantom fungus.

Phantom Fungus: hp 30; *Monster Manual* 149.

Tactics: The phantom fungus remain motionless and invisible among the rocks until a PC wanders within reach. It then attacks quickly and mindlessly until defeated or the PC is dropped to 0 hit points or fewer. If the latter occurs, the phantom fungus tries to the drag its victim to the edge of the room before stopping to begin its meal.

A large fissure in the northeast part of the cave leads to area 24. A passage in the southwest leads to area 25.

South of the cavern the stream runs through a 1-mile-long, twisting natural tube that cannot be followed very easily. A Small PC with darkvision and *water breathing* can navigate the flooded tunnel in 1 hour if she makes three successful Swim or Escape Artist checks (DC 10) over the course of the journey to avoid obstacles.

Magic Portal: On the east platform, a 10-foot-tall, sculpted slab of white marble encloses a circular stone portal. The slab bears the same image of Penfavasta inlaid on Yenejg's amulet, oversized but otherwise identical. The portal has no hinges and looks as if it were simply fixed in the rock. The slab radiates strong Abjuration magic and is incredibly thick and resilient.

Magical Marble Portal: 10 in. thick; Hardness 30; hp 150; SR 30; Break (DC 35).

Trap (EL see below): If a PC touches the portal with Yenejg's medallion (see "The Marilith's Disk" sidebar), the marble slab glows and becomes an opaque curtain of monochromatic light. If left alone, the opalescent portal shimmers and wavers for a minute before turning back to marble. The curtain is like a single layer of a *prismatic wall* spell, but its light is not strong enough to blind onlookers. A different color curtain appears each time the portal is activated (in the following order: red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, violet) until each color has been activated once. The sequence then "resets."

Yenejg's medallion is impervious to any of the *prismatic wall* effects of the portal. A single Spellcraft check (DC 28) identifies the curtains for what they are, possibly suggesting the way to negate them (see the *Player's Handbook*, page 239, for details). If the PCs wait for the "right" color to come out, they have a wide choice of spells to negate the portal. (Yenejg usually used *magic missile* on the blue curtain.) When negated, the color disappears for 3 minutes, leaving the passage open. Once this time has elapsed, the shimmering portal reappears with the next color and lasts for a full minute before turning to solid marble again.

Prismatic Curtain: CR varies; effects described in the *prismatic wall* table on page 239 of the *Player's Handbook*. For XP purposes, the portal is considered to have an CR equal to the level of the spell used to negate a curtain; for instance, if the PCs use a *daylight* spell to negate the indigo curtain, the trap is considered CR 2 or 3 (*daylight* is a 2nd-level spell for bards, sorcerers and wizards and a 3rd-level spell for clerics).

24. Northern Grotto.

This small grotto is almost completely encrusted by moss and small fungi. The stream running through it springs from a narrow crack on the north wall. The water pouring out from the fissure forms a clear, 2-foot-deep pool in the middle of the cave.

A PC who carefully searches the pool or makes a successful Spot check (DC 17) finds a large, 1-pound chunk of raw, transparent quartz (of volcanic origin). This product of an ancient, distant eruption was carried here by the stream and partially cleaned of its ashen crust.

Treasure: A PC who succeeds at an Appraise check (DC 14) can determine that, if properly worked by a gemcutter, the quartz chunk can become a huge, colorless rock crystal worth 1,500 gp. Refining the gem requires a successful Profession (gemcutting) check (DC 26); failure produces a much less valuable result (500 gp).

Development: The fissure on the north wall is impassable even for Small creatures.

25. Southern Grotto.

The ceiling inside this cave is 20 feet high. Here the rocky formations are particularly bizarre, similar to elaborate draperies and undulating curtains. A 5-foot-wide passage opens in the south wall.

If the pewter post was not in area 21, the PCs find it here, on the floor near the north wall of the cave. In the middle of the uneven rocky floor, the PCs can detect traces of an old camp made by the same creatures who destroyed the stone golem in area 22 (Search, DC 20): a broken clay cup, pieces of coal, dry fruit shells. Unable to open the marble portal in area 23, the subterranean adventurers took the pewter post as their only reward for defeating the construct. The object, however, was too heavy, and they abandoned it just a short distance from its original location. To recover the post, the PCs must face the **Creature**, which has crawled here from a crack in the south tunnel.

Creature (EL 10): A wandering roper currently occupies the cave. The monster stands near the cave wall opposite the pewter post; it attacks as the PCs inspect the object.

Roper: hp 85; *Monster Manual* 156.

Tactics: The roper is positioned on the ground among several strange rocky outcroppings, so it receives its full +8 racial bonus to Hide checks due to the rocky terrain (for a total of +18). It waits until two or more PCs come within range of its strands before attacking. Although quite intelligent, this roper isn't interested in bargaining unless the PCs can provide it with an alternate source of fresh meat.

Development: The passage leading south ends in a cave-in after a few yards. If you'd like, the tunnel could be used to bring the PCs directly to a section of the Underdark and another adventure.

The Hidden Shrine (Areas 21–34)

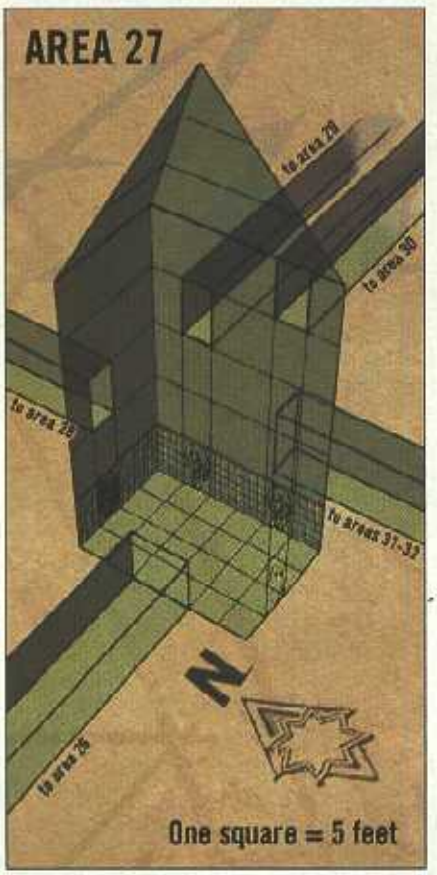
Passing through the magical portal in area 23, the heroes enter what was once Penfavasta's home and Yenejg's hidden shrine. The rooms and corridors are lined with green tiles shaped like reptilian scales. Any light source moving along the tunnels is reflected in such a way that a soft, slimy glow glistens on the tiles, giving the impression that the whole wall is undulating like some colossal snake. Here the air is drier, warmer, and surprisingly freshened by a light, whirling breeze; this wind, however, carries a faint, disturbing smell of mysterious incense.

All doors in this part of the dungeon are made of reinforced wood; unless otherwise noted, they are still perfectly functional, have no lock, and open easily by lowering a brass handle. The corridors are 10 feet high.

26. Ominous Cylinder.

A thick central column supports the 20-foot-high ceiling of this room. The column is an upright cylinder of iron, 6 feet in diameter and covered by 10-inches-long spikes that jut menacingly from its surface.

The cylinder has a nasty look, but it's immobile and harmless, for Yenejg Togan died before enchanting it as a magical trap. The cylinder sounds hollow, and the steel spikes can be unscrewed (Strength, DC 22). Through a hole left by an unscrewed spike, the PCs can see a narrower column of solid granite completely encased by the iron cylinder.



27. Winged Demons.

This tall room stretches upward 80 feet to its apex. You enter the room at floor level, from the 10-feet-wide passage in the middle of the west wall. On the other three walls, four 5-feet-wide archways open on the top of truncated pilasters at various heights. A 10-foot-tall band of different tiles runs all around the base of the chamber. The tiles bear the typical spiraling motif of elemental air. Under each of the high passages, at the base of the four pilasters, the band is interrupted by the painted, majolica figure of an 8-foot-tall, winged demon. The four demons are perfectly identical in appearance and pose and look forward with a fixed, hateful glare.

See the adjacent diagram for the room's structure. The demonic statues and the spiraling symbols painted on the tiled floor radiate Conjuration magic when a *detect magic* spell is cast. PCs who make a successful Knowledge (the planes) check (DC 15) recognize the demons as vrocks. The whirling breeze that blows in this part of the dungeon is a little stronger here, as is the odor of exotic incense. This room is magically linked to the Elemental Plane of Air (the source of the fresh air) and to the Abyss (the source of the disturbing smell reminiscent of incense).

To reach the top of the truncated pilasters, the PCs must make a very difficult Climb check (DC 35) on the majolica tiles, or use magic. The corridors beyond the high passages and the corresponding sections of dungeon were built at different

heights (as noted on the "Secret Cavern" map). A *locate object* spell used in this room to find Jainos Tyskie's family ring reveals the passage to the south to be the right one. (The information given by the sorcerer concerning the ring is sufficient to use *locate object* successfully.)

Two rounds after one or more living creatures enter the room, the eyes of the demon images glow with a red light, the breeze and odor of incense grows stronger, and the sinister presence of some creature—the vrock Typazkar—can be "felt" by anyone in the room. Once Typazkar is alerted to the arrival of intruders, read or paraphrase the following:

> The fixed eyes of the demons flare red and the stirring breeze increases, bringing an even stronger odor of incense.

Yenejg linked Typazkar's awareness to the majolica statues, and the vrock can use them to scry on the chamber and its occupants. Two rounds after the statues' eyes begin glowing, a *summon monster IX* spell (cast by a 17th-level caster) brings Typazkar to the room. This spell can be activated once/day; destroying all four statues negates the spell and prevents the vrock from materializing.

Majolica Vrock Statues, Hollow (4): Hardness 6; hp 30; SR 21; Break (DC 20).

Creature (EL 11): Typazkar does not use its telepathy to contact the PCs. Instead, the vrock uses the 2 rounds before its appearance to activate its *detect good* and *mirror image* spell-like abilities. On the third round, the vrock materializes at the apex of the room, just below the ceiling.

Typazkar (Vrock): hp 61; *Monster Manual* 41.

Tactics: Typazkar charges with a single claw attack. During the fight, the vrock does not use any supernatural or spell-like abilities, preferring to make full-attack actions. The demon concentrates all five of its melee attacks on a single target. Typazkar also uses its extraordinary ability to release spores every 3 rounds as a free action. The demon fights to the death, using its *detect good* power to discern its preferred targets. If not killed, Typazkar automatically returns to the Abyss after 17 rounds (when the *summon monster IX* spell duration expires).

Development: Yenejg used *levitate* to traverse this room, instructing the vrock to elevate anyone else with its *telekinesis* ability. PCs can use similar magic to navigate the room.

28. Ceiling Trap.

> The corridor makes a sharp bend and ends at a wooden door. A 6-inch-diameter, brass eight-pointed star is fixed to the middle of the door.

Trap (EL 3): Beyond the door, a 5-foot-square room houses the bulky mechanism of a complex and deadly trap. When someone opens or smashes down the door (Break DC 16), a metal bar on the other side falls on the floor, releasing a winch connected to a hoist and set of steel chains that hold up a section of false ceiling over the passageway. The false ceiling consists of three 6-inch-thick, 5-foot-square slabs of marble (each weighing about one ton) that are linked to the chains with screw pitons. When the false ceiling falls, any PCs standing in the 5-foot by 15-foot space before the door suffers 6d6 points of damage, or half damage if a Reflex save (DC 19) succeeds. Disarming this trap is difficult, but PCs aware of the trap can devise a method to activate it from a safe distance.

Crushing Ceiling: CR 3; 6d6 points of damage; Reflex saving throw (DC 19) halves; Search (DC 21); Disable Device (DC 29).

29. Idol Trap. The corridor bends north and dead-ends after 20 feet. At the end of the hall stands a 3-foot-high cylindrical plinth topped by a 3-foot-tall stone idol resembling a crouching dretch with a gaping maw and gangly, outstretched claws.

Trap (EL 3): The demon idol radiates a chaotic evil aura, and a *detect magic* spell reveals a moderate Necromantic aura.

If one or more lawful or good intruders come within 20 feet of the idol, it shoots the black ray of an *enervation* spell at the nearest target. If the sculpture senses neutral heroes only (or PCs obscured by *undetectable alignment*), the aura of black energy just lingers on the idol as long as an intelligent creature (Int 3+) stays within range.

Touching or attacking the idol in any way triggers the *enervation* effect (with a +6 circumstance bonus to hit). A PC who casts *detect magic* and makes a Spellcraft check (DC 24) on the aura identifies the *enervation* effect and can counterspell it. A successful *dispel magic* cast on the idol (DC 28) removes the trap. Reckless PCs can also attempt to destroy the idol before it discharges its ray, but this is extremely difficult (hardness 8, hp 180, Break DC 35).

The trap cannot target a PC who moves out of sight. PCs just peering around the bend have a good chance of avoiding the trap and have up to 90% cover. The idol detects nearby creatures and their alignments with a magical blindsight and can project its attack into the Ethereal Plane.

If hit, the target of the *enervation* ray suffers 1d4 negative levels (no save). After shooting the enervation ray (or after the *enervation* effect is dispelled or counterspelled), the idol breaks into minute fragments.

Enervation Trap: CR 3; ray attack (+6 ranged) for 1d4 negative levels damage (as *enervation* spell); this trap cannot be disabled by normal means.

30. Telekinetic Trap. Read or paraphrase the following when the PCs round the bend in the corridor:

> Stone blocks and heavy ceramic tiles are scattered at the end of this unfinished corridor. Suddenly, two blocks and five tiles rise from the floor and float in the air.

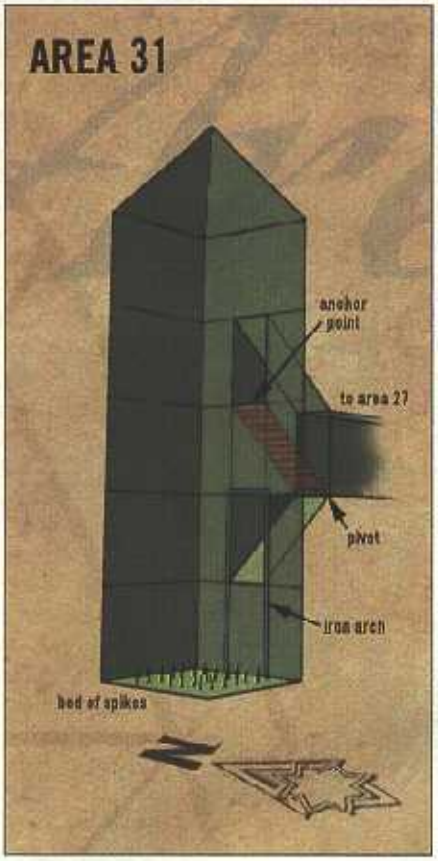
The floating blocks and tiles, which radiate Transmutation magic under the scrutiny of a *detect magic* spell, attack the PCs as objects thrown with a *telekinesis* spell (9th-level caster).

Trap (EL 4): The trap springs when one or more intelligent creatures (Int 3+) come within 15 feet of the end of the corridor. Each projectile attacks a different target, chosen at random among those possible, detecting nearby creatures with a magical blindsight. The five 25-pound tiles each deal 1d6 points of damage, while the two 100-pound blocks deal 4d6 points of damage apiece. A PC who makes a successful Spellcraft check (DC 20) can identify the *telekinesis* effect and can counterspell it. A successful *dispel magic* cast on the end of the tunnel (DC 20) removes the trap. The blocks and tiles can also be destroyed through brute force. Consider all projectiles to have AC 10. The tiles have 15 hit points each, and the blocks have 60 hit points.

The trap strikes with a +4 bonus to initiative, and it cannot target a PC who moves out of sight. PCs just peering beyond the corner from the sharp bend before the trap have a good chance of avoiding it and receive up to 90% cover, depending on their actions. After making their ranged attacks (or after a successful dispelling or counterspelling), the enchanted blocks crumble to dust.

Telekinetic Projectiles (7): CR 4; +6 ranged, 4d6 (×2) and 1d6 (×5) points of damage; this trap cannot be disabled by normal means; hardness 8; hp 15 and 60.

31. The Mace. This chamber is one elaborate trap. Refer to the adjacent diagram for the room's structure, and read or paraphrase the following when the PCs approach the room:



> A wooden stairway leads 10 feet up to a wooden door painted deep black. The door is adorned with the tessellated image of a heavy mace, inlaid on the surface with milky white pieces of mother-of-pearl.

Treasure: If pried from the door, the mother-of-pearl pieces are worth a total of 20 gp. The door itself is stuck in its frame, and forcing it open (with a successful DC 6 Strength check) activates an insidious **Trap.**

Trap (EL 6): The door at the top of the stairs appears stuck. Forcing it open releases two hooks beneath the staircase that prop up its upper end. The wooden stairway swings down into a hidden space below. Anyone on the steps falls down a chute into a 10-feet-deep pit lined with steel spikes.

The room beyond is shaped like a tall silo, with the floor 30 feet below the top of the stairway. The pyramidal ceiling is studded with large, metal bosses shaped like gaping, fanged mouths. Each spike on the floor corresponds to a particular boss. Both the floor spikes and the bosses above radiate Conjuration magic when a *detect magic* spell is cast. When a spike draws blood from a living creature in the room, the boss over it flashes and triggers a *summon monster III* spell. Each spell summons a vargouille, which dives in the following round to finish anyone who has fallen into the trap.

Spiked Pit and Summoning Trap: CR 6; 2d6 points of falling damage, 1d3+1 spike attacks (+12 melee) for 1d6 points of damage per successful hit; each hit summons a vargouille (see **Creature** below); Reflex saving throw (DC 22) negates; Search (DC 23); Disable Device (DC 27).

Creatures (EL included in the Trap): The vargouilles summoned by the steel mouths on the ceiling disappear after 10 rounds and cannot leave the room. While fighting on the bed of spikes, a PC suffers a -2 penalty to attack rolls and a -4 penalty to effective Dexterity, and moves at half speed.

A PC struck by a vargouille must succeed at Balance check (DC 5 plus the damage suffered) or provoke an immediate

attack of opportunity from one of the spikes. A maximum of ten vargouilles can appear in the room in a single day.

Vargouilles (up to 10): hp 5 each; *Monster Manual* 182.

32. Gate Room.

This chamber has a vaulted, 15-foot-tall ceiling supported by six evenly spaced pillars. A rectangular altar has been raised on a pedestal in the eastern half of the room, with an elaborate set of chains and shackles fixed on its top. The base of the altar is 4 feet wide and 8 feet long, decorated with interwoven carvings representing chains, spikes, and blades. Oval plates of gold, each with a staring eye engraved on its surface, have been fixed in the middle of each of the four sides of the altar.

The center of the east wall features a 10-foot by 10-foot false portal shaped rather like a horseshoe. The false portal has a 1-foot-wide brass frame circumscribing a smooth slab of white marble. The frame is decorated with arcane symbols and demonic faces. Red gems are set in the brass frame at various points.

Like the teleportation rooms (areas 10 and 21), the false portal is a device invented by Yenejg Togan. If a *dimension door, teleport, teleport without error, passwall,* or *plane shift* spell is cast while touching the marble slab, instead of the normal effect the caster causes a *gate* to open within the frame. An *analyze dweomer* spell cast on the false portal reveals its power, as does an Intelligence check (DC 17) made after using *read magic* on the frame's arcane symbols.

If you are not prepared for your PCs to deal with an extraplanar *gate*, you can rule that the portal works under prohibitive conditions, such as the performing of foul sacrifices. The activated *gate* radiates Transmutation and Conjuration magic. A total of seventeen identical red garnets (worth 100 gp each) are set into the frame at various points; they can be dislodged with a short blade or sharp tool. If one of the garnets is removed from the frame, the *gate* cannot be created.

The top of the altar is smooth marble with four steel rings near the corners where the shackles are fixed. The four gold disks on the base weigh 5 pounds each and are worth a total of 1,200 gp (Strength check, DC 23, to remove). The altar radiates Abjuration and Conjuration magic when a *detect magic* spell is cast, as well as a strong lawful evil aura. Yenejg used the altar during sacrificial rituals. To hold his screaming victims, the wizard bound a kyton within the altar. When the PCs enter the room, the chains rattle vigorously. Read or paraphrase the following:

The steel chains on the altar rattle about as if shaken by an invisible force. A sparkling, green light appears in the eyes of the disks around the altar base. Then, you hear a guttural voice from within: "Who goes there? Is it you, untruthful wizard? Where have you been? What about your oath to release me after seven years of service? Do so at once!" As the voice echoes in the room, you see two chain segments rise from the altar like steel tentacles. With a series of frightening clicks, each chain sprouts razor-edged barbs.

Yenejg summoned Ramzash, the kyton trapped inside the altar, when he became ruler of the city. Yenejg made a pact with the captured devil, vowing to release him after seven years of willing service as torturer and guardian of this room. Unfortunately for Ramzash, the wizard did not live long enough to free him, and the kyton has remained inside his prison ten times longer than was promised him. The kyton's material body is hibernating inside the altar base, which is hollow like a sarcophagus. From within the sarcophagus, however, Ramzash can use his ability to animate chains, and he uses the golden eyes to see, hear, and speak.

The kyton is furious about his situation. If the PCs answer Ramzash's questions in a truthful and logical way, explaining what has happened to Yenejg Togan, the kyton asks them to free him from his prison. Ramzash does not know about other rooms in the dungeon, and he is unwilling to say anything about the sacrifices performed in the room during his first three years of captivity. He does know that light can break the enchantment that keeps his material body in hibernation, and so he asks the PCs to remove the lid of the altar-sarcophagus.

Breaking the altar base (hardness 8; hp 30; SR 20) or tearing off a golden eye-disk have the same effect of removing the lid, as these actions create a hole in the structure that allows a sliver of light inside. Ramzash hated his chaotic evil master and is eager to return to his home plane; he swears that he will depart immediately for the Nine Hells if the PCs free him from his prison. If the PCs refuse to help, the kyton attacks them with his chains, trying to keep them out of the room. On the other hand, if the PCs agree to his deal, Ramzash lets them approach the altar. Removing the lid requires a successful Strength check (DC 21). Inside the altar-sarcophagus, the PC find the horrid kyton with eyes closed and his chain-shrouded arms crossed over the chest. As soon as light falls upon his body, Ramzash's eyes pop open and he laughs gleefully: "You did it, mortals! See you in the Nine Hells!" The lawful kyton keeps his word and disappears the following round in a cloud of smoke.

Creature (EL 5): While trapped in the altar, the body of Ramzash is practically invulnerable and the PCs must fight his two chains instead (hardness 11; hp 13 each; SR 17). The chains have a reach of 20 feet. Attacking a chain is like striking a weapon and provokes an attack of opportunity from the kyton (maximum of one per round). Thanks to the golden eyes on the altar base, Ramzash is magically aware of his surroundings within 60 feet, can *see invisibility,* and fights with no penalties due to his condition. If both chains are broken, the trapped kyton dies of shock with a horrible scream: His material body crumbles to dust, and the green light in the golden eyes goes out. The PCs should be awarded Ramzash's full XP value if they defeat the chains, but only half if they free the kyton from his prison. (A destroyed devil is a better accomplishment than one just sent back home).

Ramzash, Kyton: hp 45 (almost untouchable while trapped in the altar); *Monster Manual* 48.

Tactics: Ramzash targets spellcasters within reach of his chains first, hoping that fighters and their ilk will be foolish enough to smash open the sarcophagus to reach him. If a PC begins attacking the chains, he immediately changes his focus to that person, not stopping until that foe is slain.

33. Anteroom. The east door is trapped (see **Trap #1** below). The trap is triggered the instant a living creature other than Yenejg or Penfavasta crosses the doorway.

Trap #1 (EL 7): A *symbol of insanity* has been inscribed on the floor in the doorway. When the door is closed, the symbol is obscured and requires a successful Search check (DC 33) to notice; when the door is opened, the symbol is automatically visible. The *symbol* looks like a stylized "Y."

When triggered, the *symbol* affects all creatures within 60 feet whose combined total hit points do not exceed 150. The *symbol* lasts until it has affected 150 hit points worth of creatures. The effects of the symbol are identical to the *insanity* spell (see *Player's Handbook*, page 217).

Symbol of Insanity: CR 7; causes *insanity* (as the spell) to all creatures within 60 feet whose total hit points do not exceed 150; Will save (DC 22) negates; *read magic* with a successful Spellcraft check (DC 19) allows one to identify the effects of the *symbol* without discharging it; Search (DC 33); Disable Device (DC 33).

Read or paraphrase the following when the PCs peer into the chamber:

> This room looks like a small study. An ornate desk stands against the south wall, with a matching chair and a clay trash can nearby. A large trunk sits in the northeast corner. The clay mask of a grinning medusa hangs on the wall over the trunk. An odd-looking padded armchair sits in the northwest corner, and a circular wool rug covers the center of the floor. A heavy oak door is set into the diagonal wall between the west and south walls.

This anteroom was used by Yenejg to rest and meditate during his visits to Penfavasta. The diagonal passage leads directly to what once was the marilith's apartment (area 34).

The clay trash can is empty.

YENEJG TOGAN'S PLANAR SYLLABUS

This tome is a thorough account of Yenejg's travels in the outer planes, and it includes information about outsiders. It was written by the wizard in enchanted, cryptic marks to magically train an apprentice. The book radiates Divination magic when a *detect magic* spell is cast, and its basic contents can be determined by a PC who speaks Abyssal or Infernal. Yenejg's syllabus can be studied in three days by a PC able to cast *comprehend languages* or with a successful Decipher Script skill check (DC 25). A PC who spends three consecutive days studying the tome gains 6 ranks of Knowledge (the planes). After conferring this bonus, the writing on the pages disappears.

Yenejg' syllabus is not an evil book, per se, and even good PCs can benefit from the lore it contains. Unread, the syllabus has a market price of 3,000 gp (500 gp per skill rank conferred), but a sage specializing in the outer planes might pay twice as much. An arcane spellcaster who has gained the 6 ranks of Knowledge (the planes) from Yenejg's diary can rewrite the book if she has the Scribe Scroll feat and is able to cast *contact other plane* and *legend lore*. The number of Knowledge (the planes) ranks conferred by the new book must be equal to or less than half the number ranks of its author (rounded down). The writer must spend a week, 500 gp, and 20 XP per skill rank stored inside the syllabus.

On top of the desk rest three quills, a triple inkpot (containing the dried remains of black, red, and blue inks), a charcoal pencil, and the items described under **Treasure #1** below. The desk has four drawers, all of which are locked; they contain **Treasure #2**.

Locked Wooden Drawers (4): 1 in. thick; Hardness 5; hp 5; Break (DC 14); Open Lock (DC 19).

The large trunk against the east wall is made of oak planks bound with iron and closed with a big, rusty padlock. Inside is **Treasure #3**. The clay medusa mask hanging over the trunk is a mundane and harmless object.

Locked Large Trunk: 1 in. thick; Hardness 7; hp 18; Break (DC 24); Open Lock (DC 23).

The wooden parts of the padded armchair are carved to resemble hordes of screaming dretches. The armchair radiates Transmutation magic if a *detect magic* spell is cast, and it is dangerous (see **Trap #2** below) to anyone but its deceased owner.

Treasure #1: In addition to the less valuable items, PCs searching the top of the desk find a sharpening knife made of platinum and silver (40 gp), a golden candelabra shaped like a five-headed hydra (250 gp), and two books bound in silver.

One of the two tomes on the desk is a spellbook. The metal binding of the book is locked (Open Lock, DC 30; Break DC 25) and covered with demonic carvings, but it is not trapped. The pages inside contain the following arcane spells: 3rd—*keen edge, fly, summon monster III, vampiric touch*; 4th—*solid fog, contagion, polymorph other*; 5th—*lesser planar binding, teleport*; 6th—*summon monster VI, control water*. The spells fill 92 of the 100 pages of the book.

The other book looks similar to the first, but it is a cryptic diary of Yenejg Togan's experiences in the outer planes. See the "Yenejg Togan's Planar Syllabus" sidebar for details on this magic tome.

Treasure #2: The desk drawers hold the following items:

Drawer 1. This drawer contains a stack of blank parchment, a fine brush made of fiendish boar bristles (5 gp), and a wooden holy symbol of Pelor (taken from a slain adventurer).

Drawer 2. This drawer contains a portable silver incense burner (10 gp), a small wooden box of seventeen tindertwigs, and four rectangular blocks of green incense. The incense is magical and has a smell similar to the exotic odor that pervades this part of the dungeon. If burned, it has the effect and duration of a *potion of intelligence* for every living being within 10 feet.

Drawer 3. This drawer holds three identical, unlabeled crystal vials containing different liquids: a *potion of bull's strength*, a *potion of cure serious wounds*, and a *potion of gaseous form*. Breaking or forcing open the drawer (rather than picking the lock) has a 50% chance of shattering one of the vials (determined randomly).

Drawer 4. This drawer contains a gold-rimmed magnifying glass (120 gp), a pouch containing seven moonstones (50 gp each), and a strange dagger. The dagger, made of soft pewter, is magical. Its blade is shaped like a forked tongue, and its hilt looks like a grotesque reptilian demon with arms outstretched. Although useless in combat, the dagger works as a *brooch of shielding* for its bearer. It can absorb 45 more points of *magic missile* damage before melting.

Treasure #3: The trunk contains a folded green cloak, a large bedroll, three woolen blankets, a leather bag containing 320 sp, and a black, 2-foot-long wooden stick with a silver tip.

The tip is shaped like a minute demon holding its right forefinger before its mouth. The stick is a *wand of silence* with 22 charges remaining.

Trap #2 (EL 3): If an intelligent creature (Int 3+) touches the armchair, she must make a Fortitude save or be turned into a dretch by a *polymorph other* spell. The trap works only once, after which time the magical aura of the armchair fades away. A successful *dispel magic* cast on the armchair removes the trap (DC 18).

↗ ***Polymorphing* Armchair:** CR 3; turned to a dretch (see *Monster Manual* for details) by a *polymorph other* spell; Fortitude saving throw (DC 16) negates; this trap cannot be detected or disabled by normal means.

34. **Penfavasta's Room.** Read or paraphrase the following as the PCs peer into the diagonal corridor leading to this room:

> The door from the anteroom opens into a diagonal corridor ending at another door engraved with an eight-pointed star. The scaly, interlocking tiles that cover the walls surround six painted murals depicting various horrible fiends—three per wall. A faint, amber light seeps through the crack under the far door.

The murals depict the following demons: northwest wall—succubus, vrock, hezrou; southeast wall—glabrezu, nalfeshnee, balor. The murals are skillfully rendered but harmless.

When the PCs open the unlocked door at the end of the corridor, read or paraphrase the following:

> You stand before a magnificent 25-foot-tall vaulted chamber walled in fine marble. The room is 30 feet square with smooth corners. Six slender pillars, sculpted like bumpy tree trunks, are irregularly distributed about the chamber. The pillars blossom near the ceiling in a lattice of brass branches and leaves that cover almost the entire surface of the vault. Seven glowing, silver orbs fixed to the branches light the chamber. The metal foliage is populated by small, alabaster statues of monkeys and snakes. White and blue mosaics of eight-pointed stars of various sizes decorate the walls, partially covered by orange curtains.
>
> Near the middle of the floor, multicolored rugs and luxurious pillows surround a marble pool. An unmade double bed, with blue sheets embroidered with thread of gold, rests in the northwest corner. A marble dressing table with a large mirror stands against the west wall, crammed with vials, flagons, and caskets. Piles of precious items and coins are scattered on the floor, their shine only partially dimmed by a layer of dust.
>
> The gaudy furnishings and plain ostentation of treasure suggest a weird cross between the chamber of a spoiled princess and the lair of a dragon.

The seven silver globes on the ceiling cannot be taken away without extinguishing the permanent *light* spells inside them. Removing the globes requires a Climb check (DC 15) to ascend the pillars first. Each globe, engraved with a stylized flame motif, is worth 5 gp.

Some of the small alabaster sculptures among the brass branches are summoning devices similar to the demonic statues in area 27 and the bosses in area 31. When the party enters the room, a PC who makes a successful Spot check (DC 16) notices that one of the alabaster monkeys has four arms as well as a flickering, murderous glance in its eyes. Immediately after, three four-armed alabaster monkeys trigger *summon monster V* spells within the room, summoning a trio of fiendish girallons (see **Creatures** below).

The pool, 15 feet in diameter, contains no water, and a layer greenish dust has settled on the bottom. The dust is a harmless cosmetic mixture. Near the pool, four ceramic bottles of various sizes and shapes hold exotic bath salts (total value 50 gp).

The mirror on the dressing table is magical. When the PCs look into the mirror, they see a three-dimensional image of Penfavasta captured in its reflecting surface. Read or paraphrase the following:

> A three-dimensional, still image of a marilith is reflected by the mirror. The six-armed demon, sitting on her coiled spires, beholds her inhuman beauty with a triumphant expression. Her face and arms are garishly made up with a bright red war paint. On her upper body, the demon wears a golden gem-encrusted pectoral, a dozen silver armbands, and a precious headpiece. A morningstar, greataxe, and trident, now missing in the reality before the mirror, can be seen resting against the edge of the table—in a chamber where the pool is full of water and everything else looks new and shiny. Two other objects—a four-pointed shuriken and a hexagonal, crystalline prism—appear in the reflection near the marilith's elbows but are nowhere to be found on the real dressing table.

The mirror radiates Illusion magic and can take still, three-dimensional pictures of what is before it when an intelligent (Int 3+) creature touches its surface. Presently, it shows the last image of Penfavasta before she used her *teleport without error* ability to join Yenejg Togan in his battle against Falerjan. The image does not change or move in any way unless a PC touches the mirror. In this case, the reflection blurs and fades into blackness before reforming in a new image after a few seconds. This time, Penfavasta and her weapons have disappeared, and the PCs see a "picture" of themselves in a dusty room with an empty pool. If a PC tries to dislodge the mirror from its marble frame, the latter shatters and loses its magical abilities. The mirror's magic function can be turned off (an on again) by touching the surface and speaking Penfavasta's name as a command word. The mirror reflects images normally when its magic is turned off. You can use the "old" image to drop in an important clue appropriate to the campaign. Perhaps a key villain (a long-lived or undead one) paid a visit to Penfavasta seven decades ago, or an artifact sought by the PCs was among the marilith's treasures just before her death, but now is missing.

Creatures (EL 8): Each *summoned* fiendish girallon materializes within reach of a random PC. The *summoned* monsters surprise those PCs who did not notice one of the evil-looking monkey sculptures hanging from the ceiling. The fiendish girallons fight until destroyed or until 13 rounds had elapsed (at which time the spell's duration expires).

Fiendish Girallons (3): CR 6; Large Outsider (Chaotic, Evil); HD 7d10+14; hp 52, 50, 49; Init +3 (Dex); Spd 40 ft., climb 40 ft.; AC 16 (-1 size, +3 Dex, +4 natural); Atk +12 melee (1d4+8 [×4], claws) and +7 melee (1d8+4, bite); Reach 10 ft.; SA

ENCOUNTER LEVEL CHART

Some ELs in this adventure are rated a little lower due to the fact that the monsters are summoned by devices rather than encountered normally. This holds true for Typazkar (area 27), the vargouilles (area 31), Ramzash (area 32), and the girallons (area 34). These creatures present an easier challenge for the PCs, as they are more vulnerable to dispelling and protection spells.

Summarized below are the Encounter Levels (EL) for all the encounters in "The Seventh Arm."

Area	Encounter Description	EL
*	Corlag, Male Half-elf Rog5	5
**	Male Bugbear Sniper	2
**	Barbed Net Trap	2
**	Staked Pit Trap	3
**	Staked Pendulum Trap	2
**	Male Bugbear Hunters (4)	5
1	Toadstool, Male Half-human/Half-fiend Com7	7
7	Ghast (1)	4
9	Jainos Tyskie, Male Human Sor8	8
11	Gleir, Lamia	6
12	Large Water Elemental (1)	5
16	Wurzokk, Male Bugbear Exp3	4
	with 1d6 Female Bugbears (noncombatants)	+0
18	Bugbear Females (6)	2
19	Male Bugbears (5)	6
	with Wurzokk	+1
19	Male Bugbears (10)	9
	with Wurzokk	+1
23	Phantom Fungus (1)	3
	Prismatic Curtain	
	Red	5
	Orange	3
	Yellow	6
	Green	5
	Blue	1
	Indigo	2+
	Violet	3
25	Roper (1)	10
27	Typazkar, Summoned Vrock	11
28	Crushing Ceiling	3
29	*Enervation* Trap	3
30	Telekinetic Projectiles	4
31	Spiked Pit & Summoning Trap	6
32	Ramzash, Summoned Kyton	5
33	*Symbol of Insanity*	7
	Polymorphing Armchair	3
34	Summoned Fiendish Girallons (3)	8

* This encounter is not keyed to a specific location.
** These are random encounters.

rend, smite good; SQ damage reduction 5/+1, cold and fire resistance 10, SR 14, darkvision 60 ft., scent; AL CE; SV Fort +7, Ref +8, Will +3; Str 26, Dex 17, Con 14, Int 3, Wis 12, Cha 7.

Skills: Climb +16, Move Silently +6, Spot +7.

SA—Rend (Ex): If a fiendish girallon hits with two claw attacks, it latches onto the opponent's body and tears the flesh. This automatically deals an additional 2d4+12 points of damage.

SA—Smite Good (Su): Once per day, a fiendish girallon can make a normal attack to deal 7 additional points of damage against a good foe.

Tactics: The girallons attack with unmatched fury, using their smite ability in the first round and attacking the nearest targets almost mindlessly until they, or their victims, are slain.

Treasure: This room holds many valuable trinkets and trophies. On the dressing table, the PCs find the following items:

- A collection of high quality make-up implements such as brushes, nail files, combs, hairpins, and so on. Many of these items are made of gold and ivory inlaid with diminutive gems, and have incredibly odd shapes and decorations. Penfavasta's "beauty case" is worth a total of 400 gp.
- Five slender clay flagons containing perfumes, balms, and cosmetic oils (total value 70 gp).
- Three different glass vials containing *oil of timelessness*, a *potion of Charisma*, and unholy water respectively.
- A silver palm box (worth 15 gp) with a magically preserved lock of blonde hair (Penfavasta's; it might be useful to create a magic item) tied with a green ribbon.
- A small wooden box containing a collection of rings (worth a total of 100 gp). Before the Rule of the Seventh Arm and Penfavasta's terrible series of murders, the rings belonged to the leaders of the most important families of the city. Among a total of sixteen rings the PCs can find Jainos Tyskie's *ring of counterspells* (currently contains a *hold person* spell; see the "Dealing with the Sorcerer" sidebar) and a *ring of swimming*.
- A pouch containing 10 gems of various types, worth 500 gp, 200 gp (×3), and 100 gp (×6) respectively.
- A casket containing a silver necklace with thirty white pearls, worth 3,000 gp total.

The gold-embroidered blanket on the bed is worth 400 gp. The remaining treasure scattered about the room consists of a vast number of coins of all types (about 100,000 cp, 30,000 sp, 1,500 gp, and 100 pp), heaps of bangles and semiprecious stones (assume a total of 200 pieces worth 10 gp each), lesser art objects (total value 2,500 gp), silverware (1,500 gp), precious vases (total value 1,000 gp), fine carpets (total value 500 gp), and many worthless playthings. Carting everything to the teleportation room (area 21) requires some vigorous backs and 20 hours of work (assuming four workers), and bringing all the furnishings back to Shapic could be a difficult job indeed. Although the treasure amassed here is a remarkable portion of what was stolen by Yenelg, most of the wizard's booty was sacrificed to powerful demons and spirited away to the Abyss.

Concluding the Adventure

If the PCs reach Penfavasta's room and gather its treasure, they might need some help carrying it out of Tarwood. Taken to the last copper, in fact, all the riches in area 34 weigh no less than three tons. To bring everything home, the PCs could return to Shapic and rent some mules or use their own mounts as such. If the escaped bugbears have come back to the tower with considerable reinforcements, the PCs might be attacked by the bugbears as they load their pack animals with lots of tantalizing goods. The ambushing group, up to fifteen warriors, might be led by the chieftain of the tribe (War5) and include an adept (Adp4), Wurzokk (if still alive), or even a vengeful Jainos Tyskie (if the PCs attacked him).

If the PCs have given the bugbears a sound beating, the inhabitants of Shapic warmly welcome them and Bria prepares

a feast in their honor. Piasem, the old ranger, is so pleased that he offers his *quiver of Elhonna* to an archer in the party for just 600 gp (one third of market price).

Once back in the city, the heroes are rewarded by Kalier Goloda based on their accomplishments. The city treasurer gives them 300 gp for unraveling the mysteries of Yenejg's tower and 1,000 gp if they have captured Jainos Tyskie. If the PCs make a gaudy entrance in the town with a cart full of riches, a mob of beggars surrounds the party asking for charity and tugging at the cloaks of good heroes. Chevreg, the old man by the statue of St. Cuthbert, recognizes a silver bowl (worth 20 gp) as his "grandfather's spittoon" and humbly asks for it. Kalier Goloda, after endless handshakes and congratulations, thanks the PCs for bringing back what once belonged to his fellow citizens and says that, according to the local law, half of it must go to the heirs of the rightful owners (city aristocrats). How the treasurer enforces this legalized robbery is up to you, but it's unlikely that Kalier will act on threats to "oust" the heroes from the city if they do not "abide by its rules." If the heroes comply, the treasurer says that they should still pay a 20% custom tax for bringing so much money and goods inside the city walls. At this point, if the PCs show signs of hostility or intolerance, Kalier drops the matter, dismissing the tax. After relieving the heroes of half their loot, the city treasurer is willing to forgive even a PC who has stolen Yenejg's medallion from his custody. Of course, Kalier asks the PCs to return the marilith's disk to the city treasury, now that they have no further use for it. After business, if everything goes well, Kalier invites the PCs to drink a cup of wine in the city hall.

Regardless of how events unfold with the greedy treasurer, the town offers the PCs the opportunity to visit a large market, where they can sell most of the precious objects found in Penfavasta's apartment at convenient prices. Ω

Tito Leati writes: "I'm pursuing qualification to teach Italian to foreigners and exploring central Europe whenever I find some coins in my pocket instead of cobwebs. I'm also trying to figure out the secret of writing successful narrative text—in Italian, of course!" This is Tito's fourth appearance in the magazine, after "Trial of the Frog" (Issue #78), "Iriandel" (Issue #83), and "The Shalm's Dark Song" (Issue #87).

Player's Handout: The Marilith's Disk

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Submitting "Maps of Mystery" is as easy as sending them in. Be sure to include a copy of our Standard Disclosure Form (which you can download from our website) with your map submission. Digitally rendered maps are preferable to hand-drawn ones.

OUT OF PRINT, OUT OF MIND

I really disliked Issue #86. I can understand why you printed the DRAGONLANCE adventure, but you gave poor guidelines for adapting to a more "normal" campaign. Worse still, you gave it far too many pages! If it only took up a few I wouldn't mind so much.

Even worse was the Crusades adventure ("Mysterious Ways")! Ignoring the fact that the adventure portrays the True Cross as a weapon and an object of political ambition, you took a totally useless campaign setting and gave no guidelines on how to adapt it! And it's near impossible! My point is this: If you're going to use adventures from non-standard campaigns, then:

- Make sure it's a campaign that somebody actually likes (not the friggin' Crusades); and
- Make sure it's easy to adapt.

I am really sorry to have to write a letter of complaint to such a high quality magazine, but I truly feel it's necessary.

Paul Teevan
via email

Well, Paul, you have some interesting concerns. It's not our habit to print adventures for out-of-print campaign settings, but when you have such a fantastic designer as Tracy Hickman, not to mention a fantastic adventure idea, it's hard to say no. That said, this is the first complaint we've had that the adventure was too hard to adapt to non-DRAGONLANCE settings—the same for Thomas Harlan's "Mysterious Ways." In fact, most folks seem pretty pleased with "Anvil of Time" (see the next letter for one example) and how easy it was to adjust. "Mysterious Ways" is even easier: Try changing the names of the towns and the name of the artifact. Presto!

DRAGONLANCE STRIKES HOME

I've been purchasing *DUNGEON Magazine* on and off over the past eight years, and I must say that I have seen a steady increase in the quality of the adventures. It is also nice to see some of the old writers return to create new adventures. I really enjoy seeing Krynn return. I hope to see more DRAGONLANCE adventures in issues to come.

By the way, the art is getting better. The minotaur (Issue #86) looks awesome—one of the best yet.

Travis Hoovestal
Fredericksburg, VA

THIS AND THAT

Ron Wroczynski's email requesting the inclusion of stat blocks is primarily why I am writing. I understand and agree with your space concerns, but the adventures are much easier to run with the stat block close at hand for immediate reference. The game's flow is sometimes difficult to maintain, and having to stop and flip pages makes it that much harder. My proposal is to have a downloadable stat block appendix similar to those in the back of the *Forge of Fury* and *Sunless Citadel* adventures. Put these .pdf appendix pages for each adventure at the *DUNGEON* website along with the downloadable maps. Referees can print these out and mark them up or highlight them as necessary, saving the page flipping for special abilities or more complicated issues.

Also, without going into lots of long winded detail, here are my opinions on some other issues that have been mentioned in the forums:

Levels: I like low- or mid-level modules. I can modify mid-level modules up or down to suit my player's needs. I dislike most high-level adventures.

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Tokens: Great. These are very useful. Maybe dungeon tiles also?

Fold-out maps and inserts: Great, especially at a scale for miniatures.

Art: The art has been mostly great. I would like some black and white art, however. Small black and white sketches make reading the adventure more readable, and I can copy them for player handouts.

Solo Adventures: I don't like them. Go online and play a MUD or *Everquest*.

CD in this issue: I loved it. I also would not mind having the tokens, cut-out buildings, or miniature-scale dungeon tiles on an extra goodie CD.

Kevin Chenevert
New Orleans, LA

Stat blocks in the new edition are so complete, it really boils down to this: Would you rather have the information you can find in your three core books printed again in DUNGEON *and lose one adventure per issue, or would you rather have the extra adventure and do some page flipping? Believe me, the stat blocks add that much space.*

DRAGON Magazine *has published several dungeon tiles in recent issues. Expect to see more of these beginning with the January 2002 issue.* Ω

THANKS TO OUR PLAYTESTERS

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MONSTER TOKENS—SET #3

Dungeon

Sometimes it is easier to play out D&D battles using miniatures on a battle mat. If you do not collect miniatures, you can use these tokens to represent monsters. All of the monsters below are from adventures appearing in Issues #87-88. To use, cut carefully along the dotted lines. When a monster is slain, flip over the token. Color photocopy this page to make multiple monsters of the same type. Permission is granted to photocopy these monster tokens for home game use only.

Basilisk

Bugbear

Fiendish Girallon

Ghost

Half-Dragon

Wraith

Ghast

Hill Giant

Kyton

Naga

Ice Mephit

Troll

Ogre

Orc

Phantom Fungus

Roper

Two-Headed Griffon

Shambling Mound

Stirge

Frost Giant

Ice Golem

Tendriculos

Vargouille

Vrock

Darkmantle

Kurgo

Wolf

Lamia

White Dragon

Purple Worm

Krenshar

Goblin

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Credits

Monster Manual Artwork by Glen Angus, Carlo Arellano, Carl Critchlow, Michael Kaluta, Scott Fischer, Todd Lockwood, David Martin, Matthew Mitchell, Wayne Reynolds, Brian Snoddy, Anthony Waters, and Sam Wood. *Monster Manual* Art Direction by Dawn Murin. Additional art by Stephen Daniele and Douglas Kovacs.

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